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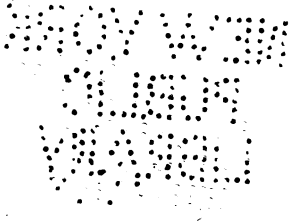

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# Preface.

The design of this volume, the first of a series, uniform with the most approved selections of the British Poets and Classics, is to present to the public, in a form suitable for amusing and attractive reading and for permanent library use, the best selections from the standard story literature of the English language. A good story is always acceptable to all classes of readers, and this collection, we think, will be welcomed, as supplying a deficiency which now exists in most libraries.

Among the stories included in the present volume, some by general acknowledgment are of the highest order of excellence—none, it is believed, are second rate, and all are worthy of preservation.

It has been the aim of the editor to render each volume of the series suitable and attractive to the traveller, pleasant to the home circle, worthy of the library,—books which either at the sea-side or the fire-side, by the river or the rail, may best serve to while away a weary half hour, when closeness of attention is impossible, and the very idea of a lengthened narrative is oppressive.

Each volume of the series is complete in itself.

The Editor.

# Modern Story-Teller.

## The Unlucky Present.

A Lanarkshire minister, who died within the present century, was one of those unhappy persons, who, to use the words of a well known Scottish adage, "can never see green cheese but their een reels." He was *extremely covetous*, and that not only of nice articles of food, but of many other things which do not generally excite the cupidity of the human heart. The following story is in corroboration of this assertion. Being on a visit one day at the house of one of his parishioners, a poor lonely widow, living in a moorland part of the parish, he became fascinated by the charms of a little cast-iron pot, which happened at the time to be lying on the hearth, full of potatoes for the poor woman's dinner, and that of her children. He had never in his life seen such a nice little pot—it was a perfect conceit of a thing—it was a gem—no pot on earth could match it in symmetry—it was an object altogether perfectly lovely.

"Dear sake! minister," said the widow, quite overpowered by the reverend man's commendations of her pot,

"if ye like the pot sae weel as a' that, I beg ye'll let me send it to the manse. It's a kind o' orra [*superfluous*] pot wi' us; for we've a bigger ane, that we use for ordinar, and that's mair convenient every way for us. Sae ye'll just tak a present o't. I'll send it o'er the morn wi' Jamie, when he gangs to the schule."

"Oh!" said the minister, "I can by no means permit you to be at so much trouble. Since you are so good as to give me the pot, I'll just carry it home with me in my hand. I'm so much taken with it, indeed, that I would really prefer carrying it myself."

After much altercation between the minister and the widow on this delicate point of politeness, it was agreed that he should carry home the pot himself.

Off, then, he trudged, bearing this curious little culinary article alternately in his hand and under his arm, as seemed most convenient to him. Unfortunately, the day was warm, the way long, and the minister fat, so that he became heartily tired of his burden before he got half way home. Under these distressing circumstances, it struck him that, if instead of carrying the pot awkwardly at one side of his person, he were to carry it on his head, the burden would be greatly lightened: the principles of natural philosophy, which he had learned at college, informing him that when a load presses directly and immediately upon any object, it is far less onerous than when it hangs at a remote end of a lever. Accordingly, doffing his hat, which he resolved to carry home in his hand, and having applied his handkerchief to his brow, he clapped the pot in inverted fashion upon his head, where, as the reader may suppose, it figured much like Mambrino's helmet upon the crazed capital of Don Quixote, only a great deal more magnificent in shape and dimensions. There was at first much relief and much comfort in this new mode of carrying the pot; but mark

the result. The unfortunate minister having taken a bypath to escape observation, found himself, when still a good way from home, under the necessity of leaping over a ditch which intercepted him in passing from one field to another. He jumped; but surely no jump was ever taken so completely *in*, or at least *into*, the dark as this. The concussion given to his person in descending, caused the helmet to become a hood; the pot slipped down over his face, and resting with the rim upon his neck, stuck fast there, inclosing his whole head as completely as ever that of a new-born child was inclosed by the filmy bag with which nature, as an indication of future good-fortune, sometimes invests the noddles of her favorite offspring. What was worst of all, the nose, which had permitted the pot to slip down over it, withstood every desperate attempt, on the part of its proprietor, to make it slip back again; the contracted part, or neck, of the *patera*, being of such a peculiar formation as to cling fast to the base of the nose, although it had found no difficulty in gliding along its hypothenuse. Was ever minister in a worse plight? Was there ever *contretemps* so unlucky? Did ever any man—did ever any minister, so effectually hoodwink himself, or so thoroughly shut his eyes to the plain light of nature? What was to be done? The place was lonely; the way difficult and dangerous; human relief was remote, almost beyond reach. It was impossible even to cry for help; or if a cry could be uttered, it might reach in deafening reverberation the ear of the utterer, but it would not travel twelve inches further in any direction. To add to the distresses of the case, the unhappy sufferer soon found great difficulty in breathing. What with the heat occasioned by the beating of the sun on the metal, and what with the frequent return of the same heated air to his lungs, he was in the utmost danger of suffocation. Everything considered, it seemed likely that, if he did not chance

to be relieved by some accidental wayfarer, there would soon be *death in the pot.*

The instinctive love of life, however, is omni-prevalent; and even stupid people have been found, when put to the push by strong and imminent peril, to exhibit a degree of presence of mind and exert a degree of energy, far above what might have been expected from them, or what they were ever known to exhibit or exert under ordinary circumstances. So it was with the pot-ensconced minister. Pressed by the urgency of his distresses, he fortunately recollected that there was a smith's shop at the distance of about a mile across the fields, where, if he could reach it before the period of suffocation, he might possibly find relief. Deprived of his eyesight, he acted only as a man of feeling, and went on as cautiously as he could, with his hat in his hand. Half crawling, half sliding over ridge and furrow, ditch and hedge, somewhat like Satan floundering over chaos, the unhappy minister travelled with all possible speed, as nearly as he could guess, in the direction of the place of refuge. I leave it to the reader to conceive the surprise, the mirth, the infinite amusement of the smith and all the hangers-on of the *smiddy*, when at length, torn and worn, faint and exhausted, blind and breathless, the unfortunate man arrived at the place, and let them know, rather by signs than by words, the circumstances of his case. In the words of an old Scottish song:

> "Out cam the gudeman, and high he shouted,
> Out cam the gudewife, and low she louted,
> And a' the town neighbours were gathered about it,
> And there was he, I trow."

The merriment of the company, however, soon gave way to considerations of humanity. Ludicrous as was the

minister, with such an object where his head should have been, and with the feet of the pot pointing upwards, like the horns of the Great Enemy, it was, nevertheless, necessary that he should be speedily restored to his ordinary condition, if it were for no other reason than that he might continue to live. He was, accordingly, at his own request, led into the smithy, multitudes flocking around to tender him their kindest offices, or to witness the process of release; and having laid down his head upon the anvil, the smith lost no time in seizing and poising his goodly forehammer. "Will I come sair-on, minister?" exclaimed the considerate man of iron, in at the brink of the pot.

"As sair as ye like," was the minister's answer: "better a chap i' the chafts than die for want of breath."

Thus permitted, the man let fall a blow, which fortunately broke the pot to pieces, without hurting the head which it inclosed, as the cook-maid breaks the shell of the lobster, without bruising the delicate food within. A few minutes of the clear air, and a glass from the gudewife's bottle, restored the unfortunate man of prayer; but assuredly, the incident is one which will long live in the memory of the parishioners of C——.

# The Sultan's Bear.*

THE Sultan being one day rather out of sorts, sent for his Jewish physician, a man very eminent for skill in his profession, and not less distinguished by his love of his own nation and his desperate enmity to the Christians. Finding that his patient had not really much the matter with him, and thinking a little gossip would not only be more agreeable, but more likely to do him good than any medicine which could be prescribed, the doctor began to discourse on the very familiar topic of his highness's favorite bear, which was lying at his feet, and whose virtues and abilities he was never tired of extolling.

"You would wonder," said the sultan, "not only at the natural sagacity of the creature, and the tact which he shows in a thousand different ways, but at the amount of knowledge he has collected, and the logical correctness with which he uses it. He is really a very knowing beast." The Jew politely acquiesced in all this and much more; but at length added: "It is well that such a clever animal is in

* This is in substance a tradition still current among those Eastern Christians who are "dwellers in Mesopotamia."

such good hands. If his extraordinary talents are not developed to the utmost, they are at least not perverted and made a bad use of."

"I hope not, indeed," said the sultan. "But what do you mean by his talents not being developed? or in what way would they be likely to be perverted in bad hands?"

"Pardon me," said the Jew, "I have spoken rashly before your sublime highness—such things should not be talked of; but it is natural that, although I know very little about them, I should consider the practice and the purpose bad, when they belong to what I consider a bad people; at the same time, if your sublime highness thinks fit to tolerate them, it is not for your faithful slave to say a word about it. I should be sorry that your sublime highness should not extend to your Christian subjects the same toleration and paternal kindness my own people enjoy."

"What in the world do you mean?" said the sultan. "What have the Christians to do with my bear?"

"Nothing at all," replied the Jew, with great earnestness; and he added, with a sigh, "that is the very thing I am thankful for. It is such a remarkable creature, that there is no saying what might come of it."

"Come of what?" said the sultan.

"Why," said the Jew, in a humble and very confidential tone; "your sublime highness is of course aware, that among the many curious secrets the Christians possess, they have one which enables them to teach bears to read."

"You don't say so?" exclaimed the sultan. "How do they contrive it?"

"Ah," replied the Jew with an internal shudder, "that is more than I can tell your sublime highness. I don't suppose that half a dozen of your subjects, except themselves, are aware of the fact; and few even among the Christians know the secret. I only obtained the little knowledge I have by

accidental circumstances, which put me upon the inquiry, and I was a long while before I could feel perfectly certain that they actually did the thing. *How* they did it, and *why*, I have never been able to learn. It is one of their deepest, and therefore, I suspect, one of their most pernicious mysteries. I do not suppose that any man among them would confess it to save his life—not even the old patriarch, if he were put to the rack."

"It is very strange," said the sultan, after a pause.

"It is wonderful," said the physician with much emphasis.

"What is the harm of it?" exclaimed the sultan abruptly, after a pause. "Why should not bears read as well as men, if they are capable of learning?"

"Most true, and most wisely said," replied the Jew. "If they were taught to read good books, it would probably mend their manners. But if that were all, why should there be so much mystery about it? Why should these people do it so secretly, and deny it so stoutly?" and again he shook his head, and shuddered. But being fully persuaded that he had gained his point, he thought it safest to change the subject; and accordingly he did so as soon as he had emphatically and earnestly entreated the sultan not to say a word of the secret he had been led to impart, or, at all events, not to let it be known that *he* had given any information on the subject.

When the doctor was gone, the sultan fell into a reverie on the advantages and disadvantages of his bear learning to read. When he went to bed, the same train of thought kept him awake; and after a sleepless night, he sent early in the morning for the patriarch. The venerable Mar Yusef lost no time in obeying the summons. Taking his patriarchal staff in his hand, and followed by his two deacons with their heads bare, and their hands crossed on their bosoms, he silently bent his way towards the palace, ponder-

ing in his mind on all the various things he could think of as possible causes for his being wanted by the sultan. The sultan dismissed all his attendants; and as soon as he and the patriarch were alone, he beckoned him to approach, and when the aged ecclesiastic had come quite close, and again bowed, not only out of respect, but instinctively, as one does who expects a whisper, the sultan said in a low, earnest tone, "You know my bear?"

"I do, please your sublime highness," replied Mar Yusef, "and a very fine bear he is."

"I know that;" answered the sultan; "but the matter is this," and he lowered his voice, and increased the earnestness of his tone; "you must teach him to read."

"To read!" exclaimed the patriarch, thunderstruck. "To read! the thing is impossible."

"Of course, I knew you would say that," said the sultan; "you must do it, however, or it will be the worse for you and for all your people."

"Most willingly would I do that, or anything lawful, to show my respect for your sublime highness," said the astonished patriarch; "but, as I have already had the honor to observe, the thing is impossible."

"Don't tell me," said the sultan. "I know more about the matter than you imagine. There is no use in trying to conceal it. I know upon undoubted authority that you have taught bears, and many of them, I dare say, of less capacity than mine. I shall send him to you this evening, and if you do not bring him back in six weeks able to read, it will be as I have already told you—at your peril, and to the ruin of all that belong to you. So now, do not waste time, for I am quite in earnest about it; but go and make preparations to receive him, for he has been used to courteous treatment."

This speech was accompanied by a wave of the hand,

which precluded all reply, and the troubled patriarch silently and slowly withdrew.

"My children," said the patriarch on his way home, addressing the two young men who were supporting him, "the sultan has resolved to destroy us and all the Christians in his dominions. He is seeking occasion against us. He does not make open war upon us; but he secretly commands us to do what is impossible, in order that he may have a pretext for our destruction. He requires that in six weeks we should teach his bear to read."

"The old brute!" exclaimed the deacon Timothy.

"My father," said the other deacon, Titus, "suffer me to speak."

"Speak, my son," replied the aged man, in a voice scarcely articulate, while he gently withdrew his hand, and laid it on the deacon's head; "what wouldst thou say?"

"Under favor, most dear and reverend father," replied Titus, "I would say that, whatever the sultan's design may be, you should not be discouraged; and that if you will only do one thing, which I earnestly entreat you to do, I will cheerfully undertake all the rest, and I doubt not that we may get clear through this difficulty."

"What would you have me do, my son?" said the patriarch.

"Just this," replied the deacon. "If I may be permitted to advise: go back to the sultan as quickly as possible, and say that, on consideration, you are sorry that you hesitated —that you will be happy to receive his bear—that you will do your best, and hope to give him satisfaction in the matter."

"What! my son," said the patriarch, "would you have me go to the sultan, and undertake to teach his bear *to read?* You do not know how difficult it is even to teach

young children." But the deacon pleaded so earnestly, that his superior at length consented; and returning to the palace, the patriarch signified to the sultan that he had thought better of the subject, and was willing to do anything in his power to give his sublime highness satisfaction.

"No doubt you can if you will," said the sultan hastily, but not in ill-humor; "and I expect you to do it—you might as well have agreed to it at once."

When the patriarch was at home seated in his arm-chair, with his deacons standing on each side, and a little recovered from the fatigue of the walk, he turned to Titus, and said: "Well, my son, and what am I to do now?"

"Nothing, my father," replied the deacon, cheerfully. "You have done all I asked you to do, and what remains I will readily undertake."

So he made his bow, and set off to make his arrangements. He chose a little square room up one pair of stairs in the north turret, and parted off about a third of it with strong horizontal bars, six inches apart. The two lowest bars were movable, and the spaces between them left open, to admit air and light, as well as to allow the inmate to go in and be brought out at the pleasure of his keepers; but all above them were boarded over, except that one which was of such a height as would be about even with the bear's head when he should stand on his hind legs. This space was left open along the whole length of the den, so that, in any part of it, he could very conveniently put forth his nose far enough to look about him.

"And now," said Titus to his comrade Timothy, when he had completed these preparations, "I must go to seek for a book and a desk; and if they bring the bear before I come back, will you be so good as to see him put in, and also to mind that the other end of the chain, which I have padlocked to the staple in the wall, is fastened to his collar,

and is long enough to allow of his lying down comfortably in the straw, and taking a little turn backwards and forwards, if he likes? and don't let them give him anything to eat, and take care not to be out of the way—that is a good fellow."

"You may depend upon me," said Timothy; and Titus went off to the church, to see about a lectionary for the bear to study, though, to say the truth, not entirely, or even principally, with that intention; for he did not mean that his pupil should commence that day, or the next, and he was in no doubt which to choose among many old lectionaries that had been laid aside. There was an immense one, with great brass knobs and corners, out of which he had himself learned to chant long before he could lift it, and, indeed, now that he was come to man's estate, it was as much as he could carry. This book he meant to use; but for the present he contented himself with observing from the window the bear coming to school in procession; and when he was satisfied that his pupil was in safe custody, he descended from the church-tower, and went to see after him. When he came to the door of the apartment, he waited a moment to listen to what seemed an interchange of anything but civilities between Timothy and his charge. Titus called out his colleague; and, without going in himself, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"Won't you go in and look at him?" said Timothy, as they went down the staircase together.

"Time enough," said Titus; "he will be better by himself just at present. Had you much trouble in getting him in? How did he behave?"

"Rather restive," replied Timothy; "but we managed it among us. Should not he have something to eat?"

"No," said Titus; "he has got plenty of water; he will do very well. But, now, come and help me down with the

old lectionary from the upper vestry, for I don't think I can get it down that staircase myself."

Between them the lectionary was safely brought down, and deposited not in the apartment, which we may now call the school-room, but in the chamber of Titus, on a massy oak desk or lectern, which turned upon its pedestal, and which they brought out from the patriarch's library for the purpose.

It was well that the school-room was rather remote, and had thick walls; for, missing his supper, the bear naturally became not only hungry but savage, growled in the most ferocious manner, and rampaged about his cage like a fury. But he got nothing by it; and when he had drunk up the water, and exhausted his powers of growling and raging, he went to sleep. In the morning, Titus brought him merely some fresh water and a cake of barley-bread; but in the afternoon, thinking it was now time for his pupil—who was tolerably tame after his unwonted exercise and fasting—to begin his studies, he brought with him the great book he had prepared for his use, and placed it open on the desk, which now stood before the horizontal opening between the bars already described. All the morning had been employed in preparing the desk and the book; and the former was so contrived that, by means of a screw, the latter could be raised or lowered at pleasure. The book was no sooner placed before the opening, at the distance of a few inches, than the bear, which was on the look-out to see what was going forward, began to snuff and poke, and showed a most eager desire to reach it. In fact, all along the lines of large letters, which were widely divided by the musical staves, the tutor, well knowing the taste of his pupil, had stuck little figs, dates, raisins, almonds, morsels of cake, comfits, and dried fruits; in short, all such little sweet things as bears so particularly delight in. The book

was placed at such a height and distance, that the pupil could only reach the top line; and the eager manner in which he cleared it, gave promise that he would prove an apt scholar in that branch of learning. One page only was thus prepared for him; for at that period of his education it would have been impossible, without harsher measures than his tutor wished to adopt, to prevent him from cross-dealings, which would greatly have blemished his scholarship. Some minor offences—such, for instance, as inordinate efforts to begin upon a second line before he had regularly perused the first—were punished by switching him on the nose, turning the double desk round—in which case it presented him with a mirror, that frightened him dreadfully—or even, in case of perverseness, leaving him to himself, without giving him the substantial honey-cake, which always rewarded a well-said lesson. In a short time the parties began to understand one another, and as Titus had prudently taken care to be known to his pupil only as a benefactor, he soon gained his confidence. The bear, who, like all his race, had an ardent love for such dainties, found that he was welcome to eat all he could get, if he did but do it in a decent, methodical manner. He soon learned, therefore, to take each line as it came; and, indeed, after a short time, his instructor not only ventured to cover the lines of the two open pages at the same time, but by enlarging the opening in front of his cell, he put it in his pupil's power to go on from one line to another without the book being raised; and after the tutor had for a week or two turned the leaf when necessary, the pupil began to show that, if it was not done for him, he could do it for himself.

As the time drew on, the patriarch was most anxious to know, but did not venture to ask, how matters were going on. At length he summoned courage, and put the question, somewhat indirectly, to Titus; and although he received no

particulars, yet he could not help feeling comforted by the cheerful manner in which his affectionate deacon assured him that everything was going on rightly, and that he need have no fear for the result.

In the meantime, the sultan, though less anxious, was intensely curious to see what would come of the matter, and frequently entered into conversation on the subject with his physician, who was, on somewhat different grounds, still more curious than himself. His sublime highness, however, who could not expect from a Jew much information respecting the secrets and mysteries of the Christians, rather confined the discourse between them to the physiological part of the subject, expressing his wonder, first, that bears should be able to learn to read; and, secondly, that such a capacity was not more frequently cultivated, asking him, withal, whether he had ever himself heard a bear read? The doctor, in Parliamentary fashion, blinked the question; observing that as it was done by secret practices, and no doubt for wicked purposes, it was best to say as little as possible about it. His sublime highness was not altogether satisfied, but comforted himself with thinking that time would soon throw light on the matter.

At length the day arrived when the bear's proficiency was to be put to the test. The sultan was seated on a divan in his hall of audience; his ministers and officers of state stood on either side; and behind him knelt his Jewish physician, who assumed that position because, although he would not have failed, even at the hazard of his life, to be present, yet he had no strict right to be there; and, moreover, he did not particularly wish to be seen in the business. All were in breathless expectation when the Christian procession entered. The patriarch walked first, with his crosier in his hand; next came Titus, the tutor, bowed down under the huge lectionary, which he bore upon his back, secured

by leathern straps over his shoulders; then followed Timothy, leading by a chain the carefully muzzled pupil. This precaution was quite necessary; for, having been kept fasting four-and-twenty hours, the animal was in no good humor, and would not have been so quietly brought in, if it had not been closely following the favorite book. But, in fact, the only trouble which Timothy had, was to prevent his eager charge from leaping at the volume while it was yet on the tutor's back. The procession was closed by a porter, bearing the desk, who, under the direction of Titus, placed it before the sultan, at such a distance as would conveniently enable the reader to stand between it and his sublime highness, who might thus see the book over his favorite's shoulder. Titus himself, thus relieved of his burden by its transfer to the desk, went round into the reader's place, and opened the ample leaves of the lectionary; while to the great amusement of the sultan, Timothy was exerting his energies to the utmost to keep back the eager pupil.

"He seems fond of his book, however," said the sultan; "that looks well." And all the circle bowed assent.

At length, having arranged the volume to his satisfaction, Titus received his pupil from the hands of his colleague. The bear stood up manfully to his task; but it need scarcely be said, he was sadly disappointed when he found that, unlike itself, the beloved book contained no sweets—not a morsel, though the often-travelled, much-licked, and still-besmeared lines retained the well known scent and savor. He ran his nose over one line after another, all down the first page, then down the second, and then somewhat impatiently turned the leaf.

"Well," cried the sultan, "he certainly seems to take a great interest in it himself; and he may understand it perfectly, for aught I know; but I wish he would read aloud.

I should like to hear him. Will you be so good as to tell him so?" he added, addressing the patriarch.

The venerable Mar Yusef was puzzled; he made a bow, but could think of nothing to say. Titus, however, promptly dropped on his knees between the bear and the sultan; and addressing the latter, he said:

"Your sublime highness will hear him presently; be pleased to give him a little time. Let him not be harshly judged, if he is a little timid and shy. This is his first attempt in public."

As he said this, the deacon saw the twinkle of the Jew's eye over the sultan's shoulder. It was only a moment, and nobody but Titus himself knew that he had seen it at all, so intently did he seem to be occupied in comforting and encouraging—perhaps we should say exciting, his pupil. The bear, however, being disappointed line after line, and page after page, and only stimulated and irritated by the scent and the slight taste which he could get by thrusting the tip of his tongue through his muzzle, began to growl most awfully, as he still went on mechanically, line after line, and turned the leaves with increased rapidity and vehemence. This continued for some time, until the pupil was evidently getting into a passion, and the tutor was growing rather nervous, when the sultan showed a disposition to speak, which Titus most thankfully interpreted as an intimation that the experiment had been carried far enough. He instantly quieted his pupil, not so much by the order which he gave, as by showing him a honey-cake, which nobody else saw, handed the chain to Timothy, and prepared to listen.

"As I observed before," said the sultan, "he certainly does seem to take a vast interest in it himself; and I dare say he understands it; but as to his elocution, I must say it seems to me somewhat inarticulate." The patriarch was

puzzled again, and again he bowed, lower than before. The Jew chuckled, and whispered something in the sultan's ear. But Titus was not disconcerted. Falling again on his knees, he exclaimed: "Pardon me, your sublime highness, we consider him a remarkably good reader, an animal of excellent parts, and a pupil who does us great credit. It is true, as your sublime highness's discrimination has observed, that his enunciation, even to those who know the language, may have some appearance of indistinctness, because he is defective in the vowel points; but we cannot help it, for all our books are unpointed. In this, which, indeed, we consider a matter of little importance, we do not pretend to compete with the Jews, who teach theirs from pointed books. If your sublime highness ever heard a bear read more articulately than this one, it must have been one of theirs; and if you would have your own perfected in that particular, you must put it into their hands."

The sultan stared at the deacon; and the Jew eyed him over the sultan's shoulder with fierce alarm. But the hands of Titus were folded on his breast, and his head was bowed down on his hands.

"Well," said the sultan to the patriarch, after a pause, during which it was obvious that some things were passing through his mind of which he said nothing, "I thank you for the pains you have taken; and although I cannot say that I quite understand the matter now, yet if I had known six weeks ago as much as I do at present, I would not have troubled you. If you are ever in want of any help or protection, remember, as I shall, that you have obliged me."

The patriarch bowed. The sultan rose and retired, resolved that his first business should be to come to a full explanation with his doctor; and accordingly, a summons for the Israelite was instantly issued. Very long it seemed to the sultan—although, in fact, it was only half an hour—

before the vizier came to report, that the doctor was nowhere to be found.

"Well," said the sultan, "I do not much wonder at that. I always thought him a wise man, and he is certainly no fool to get out of the way now. But, at the same time, let strict search be made; and also bring me the chief rabbi."

In the confusion occasioned by the breaking up of the company, the tutor and his pupil—the latter of whom had naturally dropped into the less ostentatious posture of a quadruped—were forgotten, or at least overlooked, by the crowd of courtiers, who rushed to congratulate Mar Yusef, or laid their heads together, to whisper their surprise or their suspicions. Titus, therefore, having briefly given directions to Timothy to take care that the book was removed, and to see the patriarch home, and make an excuse for his staying behind, slipped with his amiable charge through a side-door into the garden, where he seated himself on a bench, while his companion stood opposite to him on his hind legs, looking wistfully, he almost thought reproachfully, in his face. In truth, Titus was conscious that he had tried the temper of his pupil, and was afraid to let him loose before company, or, indeed, to let him go into company at all, until he should have brought him into good humor. He had provided himself with ample means of doing this; and having produced more than one honey-cake, and several other good things, and laid them on the bench beside him, he did not hesitate to unmuzzle his friend, and a merry meal they made together.

If the master was rendered happy by the issue of an experiment which had been matter of such great and long anxiety, the pupil was also raised to a state of the highest possible good humor, by being at once relieved from restraint and hunger. He looked cheerily about him; seemed as if for the first time he recognised his old haunts; gam-

bolled through the now deserted hall and passages; and before he had been missed by anybody, found his way, by a short cut, to his own rug in the sultan's apartment.

For a moment, indeed, while occupied in anticipating the explanation which he had resolved to extort from his doctor, the sultan, like his courtiers, had forgotten his favorite; but now the meeting was most cordial on both sides. The sultan seemed determined to make up for his neglect; and the favorite to show that neither scholarship, nor the discipline requisite for obtaining it, had diminished his social affections or companionable qualities.

At length the rabbi arrived. He had, indeed, been a little longer than was necessary on the way, because he had found some means of persuading the messenger to let him call on two or three friends as he came along. He did not lose much time by this, however; his only object being to ask them, to what extent they could help him in case the loan should be very large. Satisfied on this point, and preoccupied with the thoughts which had suggested the inquiry, he stood before the sultan. Great, therefore, was his surprise, when his sublime highness, instead of saying a word about money matters, briefly but clearly explained to him the nature of the business in which his services were required.

"Your sublime highness is pleased to jest with your servant," said the rabbi, as soon as he could command breath enough to utter the words.

"Not at all," replied the sultan; "you will find me quite in earnest, I assure you. He reads, and, I am told, reads as well as can be expected *without* the points; now you must teach him to read *with* them."

The rabbi was utterly confounded. He could only bow down his head, wondering what the sultan could mean, and what he would say next, and whether it would throw any light on what he had said already. So his sublime highness

continued, with some asperity: "Do not think to deceive me. I know all about the matter. You *can* do it, and you had better not hesitate; for I am in no humor to be trifled with. I gave the Christians six weeks, and I'll give you the same. Don't answer, but go, and he shall be sent to you."

The unhappy rabbi returned home in a state of bewilderment. He sent for some of his friends to consult with, most of whom were as much surprised as he had been, when they learned the nature of the business which had produced the summons. Only one of them, who happened to be a friend of the missing doctor, seemed to know anything about the matter; and he could not throw much light upon it. He could only tell them, for their comfort, that it was a very serious affair, and they must mind what they were about.

It would be only tiresome, if it were possible, to particularize all the suggestions and discussions which ensued. They were still going on when the bear arrived, and was duly installed in an apartment which had been prepared for him, as well as it could be on such short notice; for all agreed, that he must be treated with great care and attention, not only in order to propitiate him, but because it might be dangerous to let him return in worse condition than he came. So neither trouble nor cost was spared to make him comfortable; and very comfortable he was: supplied with every luxury, crammed with dainties, and petted in every conceivable way. But whatever progress he might make in the study of mankind, and in other branches of useful knowledge, it was plain that he was making none in that particular branch of learning for which he had been sent to school. His instructors did not know how to deal with him. He was on easy terms with all about him, would play with anybody, and quarrelled with nobody; but learn he would not. When they held a book before him, he thrust his nose into the cream-bowl; when they spoke of

Pathach and Segol, he shut one eye, and munched figs: and when, "as a bird each fond endearment tries," they set up a stave which might have made the very learned the Masorites to dance for joy, in the hope that instinctively, or by mere love of imitation, he might be led to join in the chorus, he only threw himself on his back, and fairly roared them down.

Sensible of all this, and of its probable consequences, the instructors had not been idle in another direction. They had used their utmost endeavors to learn how the pupil had been dealt with by his former tutor. But all their inquiries were fruitless. Titus had kept his secret so effectually, that even Timothy knew little, if anything, more than other people; or, in other words, more than had been transacted before the sultan and his court. But in collecting all such information as could be gleaned, they were indefatigable, and were scrupulously careful to imitate everything which had been done, not knowing what hidden virtue there might be in things apparently trivial. They provided a great book and a desk; and did, and were prepared to do, all that, so far as they could learn, had been done before. And so matters went on until the time came for them to produce their pupil.

The sultan was led, by various considerations, to think that it would be better to have the examination rather more private than the former one had been; and, accordingly, at the time appointed, the rabbi and his companions were brought into his private apartment. They had no hope that the book and desk—which, however, they had taken care to provide—would be wanted by their pupil; and indeed for some time past their thoughts had been turned from any attempts at instruction, and employed in framing an apology, in doing which they flattered themselves that they had not succeeded tolerably well.

The pupil, who had grown corpulent under his late course of treatment, did not at first raise his lazy, half-shut eyes high enough from the ground to see the desk and open book, which were clever imitations, if not quite facsimiles of forms deeply impressed on his memory, and calculated to produce very stimulating recollections. As soon as they caught his eye, he seemed to be seized with sudden passion, dashed at the book, and overthrew the whole concern. Fiercely did he thrust his nose and paws between the leaves, and turn them, and tear them, and trample them. At length, exhausted by his exertions—to say nothing of his having previously had more exercise than usual—he waddled away to his well known rug, absolutely declined all invitations either to work or play, and lay there watching the company through his half-shut eyes, in a state of stupid repose, which those who had just watched his effervescence did not care to interrupt.

"Well," said the sultan to the rabbi and his friends, "you are a strange set of people. When I put my bear into your hands, he read fluently, and *con amore;* and all you had to do, was to perfect his articulation. Instead of that, you bring him back fat, stupid, and savage, and so far from reading better, unable to read at all. It would serve you right, if I were to hang the whole set of you, and confiscate all your goods; but I am a merciful man, and will be content with banishment."

So an order was immediately issued for banishing the Jews from the dominions of the sultan; and they all made off as fast as they could, not knowing that their own countrymen had been at the bottom of all, or having any idea of the explanation which is here laid before the reader.

# The Ghost-Raiser.

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My uncle Beagley, who commenced his commercial career very early in the present century as a bagman, *will* tell stories. Among them, he tells his Single Ghost story so often, that I am heartily tired of it. In self-defence, therefore, I publish the tale, in order that when next the good, kind old gentleman offers to bore us with it, everybody may say they know it. I remember every word of it.

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One fine autumn evening, about forty years ago, I was travelling on horseback from Shrewsbury to Chester. I felt tolerably tired, and was beginning to look out for some snug wayside inn, where I might pass the night, when a sudden and violent thunder-storm came on. My horse, terrified by the lightning, fairly took the bridle between his teeth, and started off with me at full gallop through lanes and cross-roads, until at length I managed to pull him up just near the door of a neat-looking country inn.

"Well," thought I, "there was wit in your madness, old boy, since it brought us to this comfortable refuge."

And alighting, I gave him in charge to the stout farmer's boy who acted as ostler. The inn-kitchen, which was also the guest room, was large, clean, neat, and comfortable, very like the pleasant hostelry described by Izaak Walton. There were several travellers already in the room—probably, like myself, driven there for shelter—and they were all warming themselves by the blazing fire while waiting for supper. I joined the party. Presently, being summoned by the hostess, we all sat down, twelve in number, to a smoking repast of bacon and eggs, corned beef and carrots, and stewed hare.

The conversation naturally turned on the mishaps occasioned by the storm, of which every one seemed to have had his full share. One had been thrown off his horse; another, driving in a gig, had been upset into a muddy dyke; all had got a thorough wetting, and agreed unanimously that it was dreadful weather—a regular witches' sabbath!

"Witches and ghosts prefer for their sabbath a fine moonlight night to such weather as this!"

These words were uttered in a solemn tone, and with strange emphasis, by one of the company. He was a tall, dark-looking man, and I had set him down in my own mind as a travelling merchant or pedlar. My next neighbor was a gay, well looking, fashionably dressed young man, who, bursting into a peal of laughter, said:—

"You must know the manners and customs of ghosts very well, to be able to tell that they dislike getting wet or muddy."

The first speaker, giving him a dark fierce look, said:

"Young man, speak not so lightly of things above your comprehension."

"Do you mean to imply that there are such things as ghosts?"

"Perhaps there are, if you had courage to look at them."

The young man stood up, flushed with anger. But presently resuming his seat, he said calmly:

"That taunt should cost you dear, if it were not such a foolish one."

"A foolish one!" exclaimed the merchant, throwing on the table a heavy leathern purse. "There are fifty guineas. I am content to lose them, if, before the hour is ended, I do not succeed in showing you, who are so obstinately prejudiced, the form of any one of your deceased friends; and if, after you have recognised him, you will allow him to kiss your lips."

We all looked at each other, but my young neighbor, still in the same mocking manner, replied:

"You will do that, will you?"

"Yes," said the other—"I will stake these fifty guineas, on condition that you will pay a similar sum, if you lose."

After a short silence, the young man said gaily:

"Fifty guineas, my worthy sorcerer, are more than a poor college sizar ever possessed; but here are five, which, if you are satisfied, I shall be most willing to wager."

The other took up his purse, saying, in a contemptuous tone:

"Young gentleman, you wish to draw back?"

"I draw back?" exclaimed the student. "Well! if I had the fifty guineas, you should see whether I wish to draw back!"

"Here," said I, "are four guineas, which I will stake on your wager."

No sooner had I made this proposition than the rest of the company, attracted by the singularity of the affair, came forward to lay down their money; and in a minute or two the fifty guineas were subscribed. The merchant

appeared so sure of winning, that he placed all the stakes in the student's hands, and prepared for his experiment. We selected for the purpose a small summer-house in the garden, perfectly isolated, and having no means of exit but a window and a door, which we carefully fastened, after placing the young man within. We put writing materials on a small table in the summer-house, and took away the candles. We remained outside, with the pedlar amongst us. In a low solemn voice he began to chant the following lines:—

"What riseth slow from the ocean caves,
And the stormy surf!
The phantom pale sets his blackened foot
On the fresh green turf."

Then raising his voice solemnly, he said:

"You asked to see your friend, Francis Villiers, who was drowned three years ago, off the coast of South America—what do you see?"

"I see," replied the student, "a white light rising near the window; but it has no form; it is like an uncertain cloud."

We—the spectators—remained profoundly silent.

"Are you afraid?" asked the merchant, in a loud voice.

"I am not," replied the student firmly.

After a moment's silence, the pedlar stamped three times on the ground, and sang:

"And the phantom white, whose clay-cold face
Was once so fair,
Dries with his shroud his clinging vest
And his sea-tossed hair."

Once more the solemn question:

"You, who would see revealed the mysteries of the tomb—what do you see now?"

The student answered, in a calm voice, but like that of a man describing things as they pass before him:

"I see the cloud taking the form of a phantom: its head is covered with a long veil—it stands still!"

"Are you afraid?"

"I am not!"

We looked at each other in horror-stricken silence, while the merchant, raising his arms above his head, chanted, in a sepulchral voice:

'And the phantom said, as he rose from the wave,
He shall know me in sooth!
I will go to my friend, gay, smiling, and fond,
As in our first youth!"

"What do you see?" said he.

"I see the phantom advance; he lifts his veil—'tis Francis Villiers! he approaches the table—he writes!—'tis his signature!"

"Are you afraid?"

A fearful moment of silence ensued; then the student replied, but in an altered voice:

"I am not."

With strange and frantic gestures, the merchant then sang:

"And the phantom said to the mocking seer,
I come from the South;
Put thy hand on my hand—thy heart on my heart—
Thy mouth on my mouth!"

"What do you see?"

"He comes—he approaches—he pursues me—he is stretching out his arms—he will have me! Help! help! Save me!"

"Are you afraid *now?*" asked the merchant, in a mocking voice.

A piercing cry, and then a stifled groan, were the only reply to this terrible question.

"Help that rash youth!" said the merchant bitterly. "I have, I think, won the wager; but it is sufficient for me to have given him a lesson. Let him keep the money, and be wiser for the future."

He walked rapidly away. We opened the door of the summer-house, and found the student in convulsions. A paper signed with the name "Francis Villiers," was on the table. As soon as the student's senses were restored, he asked vehemently where was the vile sorcerer who had subjected him to such a horrible ordeal—he would kill him! He sought him throughout the inn in vain; then, with the speed of a madman, he dashed off across the fields in pursuit of him—and we never saw either of them again. That, children, is my Ghost story!

"And how is it, uncle, that after *that*, you don't believe in ghosts?" said I, the first time I heard it.

"Because, my boy," replied my uncle, "neither the student nor the merchant ever returned; and the forty-five guineas, belonging to me and the other travellers, continued equally invisible. Those two swindlers carried them off, after having acted a farce, which we, like ninnies, believed to be real."

# The Pierced Skull.

*Faust*—I have laid no snare for thee; thou hast run into the net of thy own free will. Let whoever has got hold of the devil, keep hold of him; he will not catch him a second time in a hurry.—*Faust.' Hayward's Translation.*

WHEN Rubini, the famous tenor, was at the summit of his celebrity and the full maturity of his powers, a time in which all the musical amateurs and cognoscenti of the provinces esteemed it a point of duty to make a pilgrimage to the metropolis, solely to hear him warble some of his great songs of melody and passion, three gentlemen set out from Bath one morning in May for the express purpose of following the mode, and procuring the ability to say during the remainder of their lives, "We have heard the great Rubini." They were all young, single, and of independent property, thus favorably circumstanced for the pleasures of easy friendship, and well able to afford the gratification of any impulse of curiosity like the present.

It was on Tuesday night that our three *dilettanti*—Charles Vivian, Henri Coleraine, and Frederic Burgess—arrived in London. Rubini was to sing in Bellini's "Pirata," on Thursday evening, so they had a clear day before them to spend as they pleased. This interval they

employed in visiting several old friends and cronies, among whom was one especial favorite, a personage having several little peculiarities and eccentricities of character, who was regarded with that interest which most of us are ready to accord to the decidedly "original." Tom Saint-Aubyn was a strange fellow, with talent and genius in him, buried in the depths of a cynical, intractable, and somewhat slothful disposition. Notwithstanding his eccentricities, his company was much sought by such acquaintances as could comprehend him. The three friends stormed the house of this ancient and cherished comrade, and after many a rattling salutation, and many a melodramatic embrace, told him the object of their journey, and insisted upon his accompanying them to the Opera.

"Friends and countrymen!" said Tom Saint-Aubyn solemnly, a mirthful sneer fast gathering on his trenchant lip. "Fired by the universal frenzy, you have travelled upwards of a hundred miles, and incurred many pounds' expense, each of you, for the sake of hearing a man squall. May I inquire if you have paid your subscriptions to the Bath hospital this year?"

"No, by Jove!" was the careless reply.

The next evening found all the four seated together in a box on the second tier at the Opera. The house was crowded; all the rank and fashion of London were there, full dressed and bejewelled, and making, amidst the gorgeous trappings and thousand lights of the theatre, a very imposing and brilliant show. The *entrée* of Rubini was the signal for a tremendous ovation, the popular favorite being obliged to stand bowing and pressing his breast for several minutes, whilst handkerchiefs and hats were waved, and thousands of *bravos* shouted.

"It is all mere bravo-work," remarked the sarcastic Saint-Aubyn. "The singer imposes upon society, and

society upon the singer; they make a god of him, and he, poor fellow, is driven to believe himself a god."

As the opera proceeded, however, our moralist became better pleased; and as he heard the superb vocalization and beheld the highly dramatic acting of the singer, he acknowledged that "the man was a genius, and was able to prove himself such in the midst of anomalies and monstrosities, which nothing but superfine civilization could enable human nature to tolerate."

The last act was in progress, and Rubini was singing in his best style the beautiful *Tu vedrai la sventurata;* all the house was listening with entranced attention and delight, and here and there with tears of pallid ecstasy, when, even in that moment of general prepossession, our friends became aware that their box—in a very slight degree, it is true, but still sufficiently to surprise them—seemed to divide with the singer the observation of several individuals around and above them. On looking about them, they immediately perceived the cause. There was Tom Saint-Aubyn, standing up behind them, in a position which rendered him visible to a considerable portion of the audience, with a human skull in his hand. Holding up the ghastly object in a quaint, careful manner, he regarded it with abstracted, melancholy seriousness.

The incorrigible moralist was immediately "nudged," but without effect; his mind was too powerfully engaged to be diverted. As the *cavatina* was concluded, and the harmonies of the chorus again swept through the house, a hurricane of applause arose, and *bouquets* rained upon the stage.

"How like *you* this entertainment?" asked Saint-Aubyn of the piteous fragment in his hand. "How do their *scenas*, *corales*, trumpets, drums, and fiddles, their finery and perfumes, please *your* fancy, old friend? Had you not a heart

and lute once, as well as the best of them, as gay a laugh, as sharp a wit, ruddy lips, sparkling eyes, clustering locks, and wholesome, comely flesh? How do you like to be in here, amidst music, beauty, silks, satins, jewels, and all the vanities, now thou hast gotten so grave a face? Really, but thy clenched teeth are frightful now thy lips are gone! Oh, the horrors close beneath our pretty veils of flesh and skin!"

"Come, Tom Saint-Aubyn, put that filthy thing away," whispered his friends, nudging him again, and more peremptorily than before. "The people are looking at you as if you were a—something dangerous."

"'Filthy thing,' they call thee now," continued he, still regarding the skull. "They had not dared do that at one time—when thou hadst blood to rush, cheeks to glow, eyes to flash, and tongue to threaten. 'Filthy thing!'"

A jerk at the elbow, sportively administered by Charles Vivian, sent the skull tripping from the hand of Saint-Aubyn down towards the front of the box, where two ladies and a gentleman occupied the foremost seats. Its trundling was stopped by the gentleman's foot. He, supposing, perhaps, that an opera-glass had fallen, stooped, and picked it up. At first he could not see what it was. As he raised it before his face, the jaw suddenly dropped, and, being wide open, some lingering integument only preventing its falling on the floor. The ladies, uttering expressions of disgust and affright, looked back at the quartette of friends in angry surprise: but the gentleman, letting the skull fall from his hand with a groan of horror, sank back in a state of insensibility. A great deal of confusion immediately ensued; and poor Saint-Aubyn, who was much shocked at the consequence of his indulgence in a caprice, assiduously exerted himself in endeavoring to restore the gentleman, and in assisting him out of the box. The ladies plied their fans

and vinaigrettes, the box-opener brought water, and by the combined influence of these and the cooler atmosphere of the lobby the gentleman speedily revived. The frightened, cowering expression of his features as he looked around him when he recovered, shuddering and trembling, produced much alarm amongst the bystanders, especially to the unintentional producer of the emotion, who feared that a serious shock had been inflicted upon the nervous system, perhaps to the extent of mental aberration. The ladies were greatly distressed, and their agitation added to the agony of Saint-Aubyn. He presently rose, however, from the seat on which they had placed him, stamped, shook himself, and smoothed his attire.

"Let us go home. Will some one be good enough to call Mr. Berrill's carriage?" exclaimed he, in a tone of great asperity and impatience, when he seemed to have collected his faculties to remember where he was, and the nature of the accident which had befallen him. "Put your shawls around you; we will go instantly," said he to the ladies, who were his wife and only daughter.

They had left their shawls in the box. Saint-Aubyn hurried in to fetch them. Miss Berrill followed and took them from his hand; there was an expression of anxiety and vexation upon her handsome face which smote him to the heart, and made him repent still more deeply his thoughtless whim. Mr. Berrill's opera hat was also there; he took that up, and, on handing it to the owner, made a profound and regretful apology for the discomfort and even danger which, by an inconsiderate freak, he had unintentionally caused.

"What! was it you?" exclaimed Mr. Berrill eagerly, the whole expression of his features changing, as if his mind had experienced a sudden relief. "You brought that thing here in a freak, do you say? You are a strange fellow! Well,

I did not regard the matter in that light at all; hardly to be wondered at, though, that one's nerves were shaken a bit. Never play such a trick again, young gentleman; it is very dangerous, to say the least of it; such a sudden panic as possessed me would have killed many a delicate lady. A freak, you say; well, well, let us have no more words about it. Where is the skull? I will purchase it, if you'll part with it, as a memento of to-night. There's my card; let me see you to-morrow. A freak—ah, ha!—bring a skull to hear Rubini! A skull with a hole in the back of it, too! Ah, ha!"

There was something not altogether pleasing in this return to self-possession and sudden outburst of hilarity. It required but little penetration to trace beneath the superficial cheerfulness an undercurrent of flurried anxiety and disquiet. He shook Saint-Aubyn's hand nearly all the while he was speaking to him, with a degree of warmth and heartiness which appeared unreasonable, and when he had finished, turning to his wife and daughter said, "After all, why should we go? It was only the fancy of the moment that overpowered me; I am quite well again now. Let us return and see the ballet."

Accordingly, the coach was counter-ordered, and the whole party took their places in the box again—the skull being now securely crammed into the tail pocket of Saint-Aubyn's coat, by no means to the improvement of his figure when he stood or walked. Mr. Berrill was extremely companionable during the remainder of the performance, and chatted and laughed with our friends as if he were well pleased to be acquainted with them, and rather the more than the less from the singular manner in which the acquaintanceship was commenced. A general interchange of cards took place. Mr. Berrill seemed to recognise, with respect, the gentlemanly manners and indubitable signs of

education and breeding in the behavior of the friends, and, with a show of frank carelessness, as of one desiring to enter into the feelings and fashions of young men, invited them to accompany him home and take supper with him. Observing an expression of cold surprise depicted upon the face of Mrs. Berrill, however, they declined the invitation, on the score that the pleasure would be purchased by too much inconvenience at so late an hour, and after an evening of so much excitement.

"Come, come; don't tell me!" cried Mr. Berrill, with a roguish laugh. "Inconvenience, eh? Whose convenience did you ever study, Mr. Saint-Aubyn—with your pet skull at the opera? From that trait I judge you, young friend—*ex pede Herculem.* You shall come home with me, I say. I demand compliance, in return for the trick you have played me."

In the end Mr. Berrill triumphed. "But where's that skull?" asked he, as they were leaving the opera; "you have that, I hope; don't leave it behind on any account." Saint-Aubyn told him he had it safely ensconced in his pocket, and assured him so again and again in reply to his repeated remark that "he hoped it was not left behind." The ladies proceeded home in the carriage; the gentlemen followed on foot, Vivian and Burgess walking together, and Mr. Berrill, Saint-Aubyn, and Coleraine, forming the extreme rear of the thrice divided party. Mr. Berrill talked incessantly; joked, laughed, and appeared in the best possible spirits. He detailed all the *on dits* and gossip of the political and fashionable worlds, criticised Rubini, the music of the opera, the dancing, recounted the people of rank he had recognised in the house, and for awhile, by his animation and eagerness in talking, rendered the conversation little more than a continuous monologue. While Saint-Aubyn and Coleraine were amused, they could not resist the impression that there

was something unreasonable in this excessive gaiety, especially considering the brevity of their acquaintance. The humor of their new companion appeared forced, his laughter hollow and unreal. Saint-Aubyn, to whom the study of character was naturally attractive, observed this behavior with interest and curiosity. Though Coleraine saw nothing very extraordinary in the rattling talk and continuous bursts of laughter, deeming them merely such as might be affected by one who was desirous of making himself sociable, and of destroying any impression likely to arise from such an exhibition of nervousness as that caused by the sight of the skull, Saint-Aubyn's keener penetration and more speculative mind invested them with deeper signification. As he replied briefly to the remarks addressed to him, and smiled with every fresh outbreak of merriment, he noted each look, word, and tone, and ruminated busily over the various tokens of agitation and secret perturbation he had remarked since the accident of the skull first directed his attention to the individual who walked with so cheery an air by his side. The deep groan; the real overpowering horror of the first shock; the cowering and shuddering upon recovery, so excessive, and so unlike the effects of any merely transient emotion; the defiant manner in which he afterwards looked around and angrily ordered his carriage; the remarkable relief manifested when the apology accounted for the affair as an entire accident, in which there could not, by any possibility, be a preconcerted object; the immediate change of demeanor, the laughter, and hearty shaking of the hand, and the rollicking extravagant mood since displayed; the strange questions about the skull, the desire to purchase it, the anxiety lest it should be left behind; the fact that he had barely caught sight of it before he swooned; and the remark that it was fractured;—all these particulars Saint-Aubyn turned over in his mind with the strong deep inte-

rest of one who imagines he has suddenly fallen upon a mystery—and a mystery which appears to involve some of the darker shades of human life—passion, crime, guilt, fear.

"Ah, ha! What a meeting is this! I shall remember you young roysterers as long as I live. And who wouldn't, I should like to know, after our introduction at the opera—above all places—and in this time of the Rubini *furore*—above all seasons—over a dead man's skull!" said Mr. Berrill. "Ah, ha! it is an experience few can boast of—if indeed such a thing ever happened before or will happen again."

"It was reserved for you," remarked Coleraine, innocently—"the very one individual who knows how properly to appreciate it."

Saint-Aubyn himself could hardly repress a start at the directness with which these few carelessly spoken words chimed in with the train of thought presented to his mind by what he had seen and heard. Mr. Berrill looked sharply round at Coleraine, as a man might who imagines something of importance has been said which he has not heard aright.

"What?" asked he, in a lower tone than that in which he had been speaking for some time.

"It is a sort of providential thing, I say," explained Coleraine, with a laugh, "that this completely unique and unparalleled experience should fall to your lot, seeing that you know so well how to relish the humor of it—which is what few would be equal to."

"You think so, eh?" still looking at him with rather closer attention; then turning suddenly to Saint-Aubyn, he continued, in his former manner of hearty good-humor: "It is quite true. Very few would relish the humor of your joke—I did not at first, I can assure ye; but now I like the fancy, and it will be a joke to me for the rest of my days,

and will be, no doubt, to whomsoever it is recounted. Good things become immortal. But *allons!* we will celebrate our meeting to-night—indeed, I would not have separated from you without doing so for a thousand pounds. I have some passable claret, of which I must have your opinion."

They had arrived at a house of fashionable exterior in the vicinity of Hyde Park. Mr. Berrill ushered them in, and in a handsomely-furnished apartment they found supper already prepared.

"Be seated," exclaimed the host. "Make yourselves quite at home, pray. But about that skull. It smells rather earthy. I should prefer to have it placed in another room, if you have no objection."

"Certainly; here it is," said Saint-Aubyn, drawing it with some difficulty from his pocket.

"Robert," cried Mr. Berrill, "carry that into the study, and place it carefully on the table."

The footman, with much surprise, received the unsavory relic, and bore it off.

"Dead men make a stir in the world, now and then," said Saint-Aubyn rather timorously, for ere the remark was half uttered he bethought himself that possibly it might be dangerous.

"Ha!" said Mr. Berrill. "We are all liable to fancies, eh, Mr. Saint-Aubyn? We make ourselves and other people the victims of our flights. I have been your victim to-night, eh?"

"And now the dead man, banished from the supper-table and from pleasant company, is yours. Who will be his, I wonder?" returned Saint-Aubyn, with something like a flash of his accustomed smile. "But, alas! we shall have no more flights of fancy from him, poor fellow: he is past all that—serious and sad for ever!"

"Sad as an empty bottle," said Vivian.

"Aye, aye; joke away!" cried Mr. Berrill, "but supper waits, and we had best set to."

"The ladies!" ejaculated Vivian.

"I doubt whether they will join us," said Mr. Berrill; "but we will see. Robert, send Anne to inquire if Mrs. Berrill is ready for supper. Mr. Saint-Aubyn, come here. You, who have done me a mischief, shall sit at my right hand; it is always my desire to set a good example. Ah, ha! But hark to the silken rustle! Here come our ladies!"

At this moment Mrs. Berrill and her daughter entered the room, bowed with easy politeness to the strangers, and instantly took their seats at the table. The conversation now, of course, assumed a different character. The mistress of the house had much to say respecting the performances of the evening, and upon this theme there was much pleasant and animated talking—the great musicians, singers, actors, dancers, and theatres of the world affording abundant material for gossip and criticism. Mrs. Berrill was very ladylike and *complaisante*, Miss Berrill very beautiful, and Mr. Berrill hearty and hilarious. After a pleasant half-hour supper was concluded, the ladies withdrew, and the gentlemen were by themselves again. The claret was pronounced excellent, and the host took care that it should not be "wanting." It was some time past three o'clock in the morning when this curiously-met party broke up; when they did so, all were in a very merry and good-humored condition, and Vivian and Coleraine, after shaking hands with their host and bidding him "Good-night" for the sixth or seventh time, meandered solemnly into the back parlor instead of into the street. As the footman returned the skull to Saint-Aubyn, and whilst the latter was replacing it in his much-abused pocket, Mr. Berrill observed, "I asked if you would part with that,

just now. I felt a strong desire to possess it and keep it as a curiosity; but my second thoughts have taken another turn. I wouldn't have the ghastly, frightful, horrible thing in the house. It would make a complete hypochondriac of me. Return it to its proper resting-place, the tomb, I entreat you; it is mere morbid wantonness, an insult to the dead, and an offence to the living, to carry it about with you and parade it where people assemble for enjoyment. Whence did you get it?"

"A congenial friend forwarded it from the country, a few days ago," said Saint-Aubyn, laughing, as if amused at the repugnance which had just been so severely expressed.

"From the country—what part, may I ask?" inquired Mr. Berrill.

"He lives in Gloucestershire, but where he found the bald pate I don't exactly know. I'll write and ask."

"Nonsense, nonsense; send it back to him and bid him restore it to its proper home the churchyard. Well," continued he, resuming his gaiety, which within the last minute or two had given place to a severe and irascible manner, which, however, appeared much more natural to him, "good night! We shall meet again, for I don't feel inclined to allow an acquaintance commenced in such marvellous fashion to drop. *Au revoir!* I shall search ye out, and make a descent upon your tub, young Diogenes; I have your card, and so am not promising more than I can perform. *Au revoir!*"

When Vivian, Coleraine, and Burgess called upon Saint-Aubyn the next day, some time after noon, they found him lounging over his chocolate, apparently in a contemplative mood. On the table by his side was the dumb, unconscious "lion" of the preceding night.

"There is something about the adventure we met with last night that I cannot comprehend," said he, after an in-

terchange of remarks and jokes upon the unexpected manner in which their evening's enjoyment had been brought to a termination. Then, holding the skull for the inspection of his companions, he directed their attention to a small jagged hole on the back of the head, from which various minute cracks radiated, as if the perforation had been effected by the crashing blow of a bullet. "Is it not strange," said he, "that in a merely momentary view of this piece of *manes*, this hole, above all the other strong features of it, should attract a person's observation? Even I did not know there was such a distinguishing mark upon it, till a few random words induced me to examine it more curiously than I had previously done."

Coleraine and Burgess both agreed that it appeared strange, but evinced a decided distaste to entering into any contemplation of the matter, while Vivian, with strong disgust, counselled Saint-Aubyn to throw the beastly thing away; it had caused annoyance enough already, though he was by no means sorry, altogether, for the turn which matters had taken under its auspices.

"There is a mystery here, depend upon it," persisted Saint-Aubyn, with the strong relish of a romancist. "My curiosity has never been so strangely excited as by the adventure of last night. 'A skull with a hole in it,' said he, immediately after he had recovered his panic, though he seemed perturbed enough then. Mark my words: we shall hear something more of this."

Here, without keeping the reader waiting a second, an interval of four years is passed over. During that period, Burgess and Coleraine have remained at Bath, with the exception of occasional continental trips of two or three months at a time; Vivian had taken up his residence in London, wooed and won the beautiful Miss Berriil, and become a happy husband and father; and Saint-Aubyn has

consistently kept himself to himself, eccentric and original as ever. The latter, however, could not forget the adventure of the Rubini night at the Opera; suspicion haunted his mind; and though Mr. Berrill had called upon him many times, and appeared anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, he never could endure the idea of reckoning him among his friends. He was one of that class of characters who cannot simulate. His behavior always testified how he thought or felt. He had conceived a deep distrust and dislike of Mr. Berrill—believed him, in his inmost mind, to have committed some crime, or to have had some connexion with crime—as being a hypocrite haunted by qualms and fears, and constantly assuming an air of jocoseness and bravado to set suspicion and detection at bay; and, so believing, shunned and repelled his advances with all the force of his odd, sarcastic nature. Mr. Berrill bore this for a time, twitted him upon his peculiarities, his spleen, his unsociability—called him a rough diamond, the modern Diogenes, the Japanese prince; but at last, fairly tired out, humiliated, and irritated, he bade him adieu as an ill-conditioned fellow, unendurable, and undeserving of friendship. The connexion which his ingenuous and light-hearted friend Vivian had formed with the Berrills excited a sort of horror in the mind of Saint-Aubyn. He never saw Vivian, with his charming young wife and his promising little boy, without a sudden sensation of fear and inquietude, and many a time exclaimed, with more solicitude than he would have been deemed capable of evincing for the sake of others, "Heaven spare them! let nothing be revealed in *their* time!"

In the month of August, in this same fourth year into which this narrative has suddenly advanced, Coleraine and Burgess, after a summer tour in Switzerland, were making a brief sojourn amidst the pleasures of Paris. In preference

to taking up their quarters in an hotel in the city, they hired an *appartement* in a pleasantly-situated house in the Champs Elysées, near the Barrière de l'Etoile. They had not been many days in these quarters before they discovered that a couple of English ladies rented the *première*. One day, some time after their arrival, when a few casual meetings had made the parties acquainted, a neat little note, addressed to them in the pleasant freedom of Parisian etiquette, apprised them that the Misses Barratt would be at home in the evening to receive a few friends, and would be much pleased if Mr. Coleraine and Mr. Burgess would join them —especially as the latter were of their own country, dear old England. The invitation was readily accepted. In the evening they found themselves in the elegantly-furnished *salon* of the *première*, in company with the Misses Barratt and some six or eight French ladies and gentlemen. A couple of hours passed cheerfully away. Ladies sang and played; the piano and guitar were in almost constant requisition; one or two of the gentlemen sang also, and not the least successful effort was a rattling old English ballad chanted by Burgess; and there was, between whiles, an abundance of animated talking and gossip. Time proceeded very pleasantly until so very trifling a cause as the mention of a name threw the whole party into confusion. The sisters Barratt, let it be mentioned, appeared to be ladies of education and attainments, and to command the sincere regard and esteem of the acquaintances around them. The elder, upon whose not unhandsome face there seemed to reign an expression of anxiety and gloom, which, in thoughtful moments, gave her an air of brooding melancholy, but when she was cheerful and engaged in conversation, was half dispelled, or, a Lavater might have said, intensified or etherealized into a pleasant and warm smile, might have seen some five or six and thirty years; while the younger

appeared about twenty-eight or twenty-nine, was well-looking and lady-like, and bore something of the same peculiar expression as her sister when serious and thoughtful.

It happened that a young gentleman favored the company by singing, in studied imitation of Rubini, the famous "*Tu vedrai.*" Naturally enough, Burgess and Coleraine involuntarily recalled a preceding occasion on which they had heard the same strains; and, thinking the anecdote worth telling, the latter preceded to recount to Miss Barratt the freak of Saint-Aubyn in moralizing over a skull at the opera just at the time when Rubini was singing his grand *cavatina*, and the whole house was rapt in ecstasy; the jerking it from his hand, its rolling to the feet of the gentleman, and the consternation of the whole party; the acquaintanceship which had sprung up entirely through the incident, ending in the marriage of his friend Vivian to the daughter of the gentleman who was alarmed in such a whimsical manner, Mr. Berrill. Miss Barratt listened to Coleraine with great attention as he related how the gentleman in front unsuspectingly picked up the skull, and swooned upon looking at it. She raised her hands, as if in sympathetic horror at so cruel a surprise; but when, at the end of his recital, he mentioned the name of Mr. Berrill, she shrank from him with undisguised affright—uttered, indeed, a slight shriek, and hurried, gasping and in disorder, from the room.

Coleraine was greatly shocked at the result of his innocent communicativeness, and his embarrassment was by no means diminished as the whole company, with the exception of Miss Louisa Barratt, who hastened after her sister, gathered round him, and questioned him as to the cause of the lady's agitation. All he could do was to relate the anecdote which had excited so vivid an exhibition of emotion, endeavoring to account for Miss Barratt's alarm by

supposing she was extremely nervous and sensitive, and expressing much regret that he should unwittingly have disturbed her equanimity, and interrupted the enjoyment of the company. It was many minutes before Miss Louisa returned to the *salon*. When she did so, her face was pale, and bore an anxious, perturbed expression, extremely painful to Coleraine, and by no means re-assuring to the rest of the guests. Her sister, she said, was habitually nervous, and had been so strongly and strangely affected by an incident Mr. Coleraine had narrated to her, that she begged her friends would excuse her for the remainder of the evening, or for some time at least, for perhaps she might soon recover herself. Miss Louisa then, after receiving poor Coleraine's apology and endeavoring to comfort him, tried to rally herself and her friends; to laugh, talk, play, and sing, as they had done during the early portion of the evening. For a time there was some show of a revival of animation, but there was something hollow about the sociability and enjoyment now; it had but a sort of unreal, galvanic life; the wreath of comfort, ease, and *abandon*, had been broken, and there was no mending it for the present. Matters became duller and duller, the anxious shade settled down upon Louisa's brow, the friends began to talk in low tones and upon serious subjects, and one after the other they departed. Presently, the two sisters were by themselves in their *appartement*, and Burgess and Coleraine by themselves in *theirs*. All this was very strange; our friends could not tell what to make of it. For the second time Saint-Aubyn's skull had placed a number of individuals, assembled for pleasure and enjoyment, in a most extraordinary predicament.

A couple of days after this, they were informed by the *concierge* that Monsieur Barratt had arrived early in the morning from Calais, having come from England to see his

relatives—his sisters or daughters, he did not know how the relationship stood—and was at present in the house. He was in the habit of coming once or twice every year. Half an hour after this communication was made, however, they came into collision with the gentleman described as "Monsieur Barratt." He was inquiring for letters in the *concierge*, and what was the amazement of the two friends at recognising in their newly arrived fellow-countryman, their old acquaintance Mr. Berrill!

"Ah!" exclaimed he, without any appearance of astonishment, as he advanced and shook hands with them; "I have heard from the ladies up-stairs that a couple of Englishmen were sojourning in the house, answering to your names, and I knew at once they must be yourselves. Heartily glad to see you!"

"We were not aware you had relatives here," said Burgess with a laugh, their salutations and various inquiries being concluded; "Monsieur Alexis has christened you *Barratt*, and dubs you as either father or brother of the ladies of that name here."

"Pooh!" ejaculated Mr. Berrill quickly. "He mistakes the name. There are a B and a couple of r's in both Barratt and Berrill, and he is not particular—does not stick to the text. Ah, ha! They are no relatives of mine; I am merely their man of business, having to superintend the administration of their property—a bare three hundred a year for each of them, poor girls—I wish it were more. Well, what do you mean to do with yourselves? I am off to Switzerland to-morrow. Will you come?"

The invitation was declined; they had already made their tour thither—in fact, they had not long returned from Chamouni.

"Ah, to be sure; I heard of it," said Mr. Berrill. "Sorry I was not with you. It is possible, however, I may

meet Vivian and my daughter at Lausanne, so I shall not be altogether alone. How is it our crusty friend, Saint-Aubyn, is not here?—a fine place for a moralist—plenty of food—all the vanities rampant—excellent pasture for the cynical rascal. Ah, ha! he is the queerest character I have ever met with."

They walked out together; after spending an hour in the Bois de Boulogne, making a descent into the streets of Paris, which, however, attractive as was the display of life, bustle, and gaiety there, they speedily left, at the request of Mr. Berrill, who did not wish to move about amongst the multitude, but preferred to be in the open country, "*where the air was fresh and free, and one felt oneself at liberty*," as he said. It is to be observed that Mr. Berrill received his acquaintances with much the same boisterous good-humor and cordiality which he had displayed on a memorable occasion some years before; this gaiety, however, was soon exhausted on the present occasion: his laughter gradually became less hearty and less frequent, his remarks and observations fell languidly from him, and at length ceased altogether; he grew abstracted and taciturn, and walked betwixt his friends with his head bowed down upon his breast like one absorbed in profound reverie. They had returned to the Bois de Boulogne, and were slowly pacing down one of the many verdant and shady *allées* there, when he suddenly broke from them, and grasping Coleraine roughly by the arm, said, in a low tone of concentrated ferocity—

"What made you tell my friend Miss Barratt, that ridiculous story of the skull, the other night—mixing my name up with it and holding me forth for ridicule and suspicion? Am I never to hear the last of that trick of the crazy Saint-Aubyn? Let me warn you, once for all, Master Coleraine, not to bandy that story about any more. It is most insulting and annoying to me; and if I hear of its being further circu-

lated by you, we shall quarrel in right earnest! Not one in a thousand would have borne the scurvy business in such good part as I did from the first; but when I come here into France, some hundred miles from home, and find the tale already abroad before me, and in the very place at which I rest and where I am known, and people wondering and pondering over it, my patience begins to give way. Mark me:—no more of it!"

The suddenness and vehemence of this outburst amazed his companions. The possible reasons of it, and Saint-Aubyn's old suspicions, broke darkly on their minds as they beheld the face of the speaker, white, even to the fiercely compressed lips, with inexplicable anger. Coleraine's blood rushed to his cheek at the threatening manner in which he was addressed. He replied haughtily and defiantly: he was quite able to regulate his conduct for himself—he saw no harm in relating the anecdote, and he should do so again, perhaps, if tempted by circumstances; it was quite innocent in itself, but if people chose to entertain extraordinary and unreasonable fancies about it, they might—he couldn't help that.

"But I desire that you will not bandy my name about, sir!" cried Mr. Berrill, with still increased vehemence. "You may talk what foolery you please, but you shall not mix my name up with it—preparing ridicule and insult for me wherever I go! Do you hear? I can prevent that, and I will. I will thrash you with my cane—I will thrash you with my hand—but—Ha! ha! ha! ha!—he takes it all in earnest! I have carried the jest too far—he is ready to kill me! Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

The revulsion was as sudden, and almost as irritating, as had been the outburst. Still continuing to laugh loudly, he held out both his hands for Coleraine to take. But the latter was not so speedily mollified; standing aloof, he

demanded an explanation of these vagaries—to be insulted and threatened one moment, and laughed at the next, as if he were a wayward child, was not to be endured.

"Forgive me," returned Mr. Berrill. "I daresay I have insulted you and given you just cause for offence; but—I am hardly my own master, and know not what I do half my time. Forgive me, or quarrel with me—which you will, I cannot help it." His tone was now serious, and even melancholy, and he pressed his hand slowly across his brow. "I know not what I do half my time, I say. I have fears, indeed, now and then, that all is not right with me. I am not the same man I was. At times I am quarrelsome without knowing wherefore, at times lachrymose, at times apathetic, morbid, or extravagantly gay—as if I had lost my proper balance, and were coming to a sorry pass. I would not quarrel with you in this mad fashion—if you can, pray, forgive me."

Burgess interposed, and a sort of reconciliation took place, though it was by no means cordial on Coleraine's part. The remainder of the walk, as may be imagined, did not afford any of them much enjoyment.

In the evening, Mr. Berrill busied himself with his luggage, and despatched a *commissionnaire* into Paris on various errands connected with his preparations for the journey into Switzerland.

At about eight o'clock a couple of individuals alighted from a cabriolet in the Champs Elysées, walked directly to the house of M. Alexis Louiche, and inquired if Mr. Berrill were within.

"Berrill," said the *concierge*, pondering on the name. "There is no Monsieur Berrill in this house; there is a Monsieur Barratt, as also the Mademoiselles Barratt."

"Barratt—ah! that is the name!—it is Monsieur Barratt, we mean," said the stranger, and he and his companion

were thereupon shown to the room of Mr. Berrill, who, it appeared, had assumed the name of Barratt on leaving England.

They were well dressed, gentlemanly looking personages, and evidently Englishmen. On being introduced into the presence of Mr. Berrill, they requested a few moments' private conversation with him. The Misses Barratt, and Coleraine and Burgess, happened to be in the room at the time; they retired instantly, the two gentlemen observing, with surprise and indefinable expectations of calamity, that unmistakable signs of consternation were immediately betrayed by Mr. Berrill. What passed betwixt the latter and the strangers is not known. In half an hour, however, they all left the house together, and neither Coleraine nor Burgess ever saw their extraordinary acquaintance again.

For, while they were sleeping on their beds this same night, Mr. Berrill was being conducted rapidly to England by two emissaries of the London police. From London he was immediately conveyed to D——, in Gloucestershire, where he was brought into the presence of the county magistrates, for examination, under the following circumstances.

Some twenty-four years previously, a gentleman of property, a widower, residing at D——, had died, leaving two youthful daughters. The superintendence of the affairs of the orphans was intrusted to two guardians, who had been friends of their late father, one of whom was Thomas Duvalt, Esq., a gentleman living in the neighborhood, and the other, Mr. Berrill, of London, then a solicitor. A year or two after this arrangement had been in operation, a great improvement became manifest in the position of Mr. Berrill. In place of the somewhat humble chambers he had hitherto occupied, he took a handsome set of offices in the best quarter of Lincoln's Inn, and, for a residence, a house

in the vicinity of Hyde Park, which he had handsomely furnished. He pushed his practice with great assiduity, became well known as a bustling, energetic, and shrewd man of business, and appeared as one who had cautiously worked his way upwards, had prepared himself to assume a good position, had placed himself therein directly his circumstances were ripe for it, and was in a fair way of running a busy and prosperous career. He gained recognition as a promising practitioner, moved in good society, married well, and, by-and-by, with a lady-like wife and handsome daughter, seemed to present a very excellent example of worldly prosperity and felicity consequent upon the exercise of industry and prudence.

Meanwhile a warm intimacy had sprung up betwixt Mr. Duvalt and the eldest of his wards, Miss Barratt, which appeared likely to terminate in marriage; and that gentleman found reason for anxiety and complaint in the manner in which he was treated by his co-trustee, Mr. Berrill, who seemed determined to take upon himself the whole management of the property of the young ladies. All documents relating thereto had been placed in the custody of the latter, and he had been intrusted with the collection of rents and the legal management of their affairs, in consequence of the advantages offered by his profession and position. For a time, all went well; the rents were duly forwarded to Mr. Duvalt, and concise returns made to him of the state of the property, &c., and that gentleman administered the receipts for the young ladies in the manner most agreeable to them and to his own comprehension of his office of guardian. By-and-by, however, he received an intimation from Mr. Berrill that that gentleman had found a remarkably favorable opportunity for investing a sum of money for the young ladies, and intended so to do. Mr. Duvalt replied, desiring to know the nature of the invest-

ment, and trusting Mr. Berrill would not take any steps in the matter without consulting him. To this no answer was returned; and Mr. Duvalt was much surprised to find that, at the ensuing quarter, Mr. Berrill, instead of remitting to him as formerly, came down himself to D——, paid the money he had received at once into the hands of the Misses Barratt, and, afterwards calling upon him, told him that the tone of his (Mr. Duvalt's) letter had given him (Mr. Berrill) much offence—that he was constantly moving in the most busy circles of the metropolis, and knew well how to invest money in the most advantageous manner—and that he could not endure anything like dictation, especially from one who had never mingled in the world, and whose experience of business was of a very limited nature. Suspicions arose in the mind of Duvalt that all was not right, especially when he heard of Berrill's sudden prosperity. He cautiously set an inquiry on foot, and at length discovered that his co-trustee was a double-dealer of the most subtle and accomplished character, and that he was trafficking with the property of his wards. He instantly wrote to him, intimating that he knew all, demanded a scrutiny of the affairs of the estate, and threatened, in case this were refused, to proceed by law, and compel concession. To this Mr. Berrill made no reply; but in a few days he came down to D——, for the ostensible purpose of superintending the furnishing of a house there, which, in the course of his business, had come into his possession. As soon as the house was in order, he gave an entertainment, one evening, to several of the gentry of the neighborhood, and invited, amongst the rest, Duvalt and the Misses Barratt. Duvalt called upon him on the morning of this day, but what passed betwixt them is not known; for Duvalt was never seen afterwards! The evening was one of great enjoyment to the guests assembled. Mr. Berrill was the

heartiest, blithest, and most convivial of hosts. Several times he inquired of the Misses Barratt whether they had seen Duvalt, appearing surprised and vexed at his absence. In the midst of the festivity of the evening, Duvalt's housekeeper came to inquire after her master, who had not been home all day, and received from Mr. Berrill a message to deliver to her master as soon as she should see him—that he (Mr. Berrill) was "very much hurt at Mr. Duvalt's absence, and thought he was not treating him in a friendly way." As the days passed by, and the missing man was not found, much excitement ensued in the neighborhood; but no one appeared so amazed and grieved as Mr. Berrill. He had two or three interviews with the magistrates upon the subject, and issued bills, with his name and city address appended, offering a handsome reward to whomsoever should bring tidings of the lost gentleman. On his return to London he closed his country-house, and was never known to remain in it afterwards for more than a day at a time.

About twenty years after the above period, a friend of Saint-Aubyn's found some boys playing with a skull in a field at D——. He purchased it of them, and sent it, with a humorous note, to the young cynic. A considerable time after it was returned to him, with an account of the adventure at the opera—no names, however, being mentioned. He searched out the boys, and with some difficulty ascertained where they had found the skull. A portion of Berrill's garden-wall had fallen to ruin; the skull was found in the darkest corner, where it had been scratched up by a dog. The spot was delved, and an entire skeleton was brought to light, together with a watch, chain, and seals, which were recognised by many as those worn by the late Mr. Duvalt. A peculiar formation or deformity of one of the legs also proved the identity of the skeleton. An

inquest was held upon the remains, and Berrill's arrest was commanded by warrant. He had got tidings of the affair; and he sent his family to Switzerland, and proceeded himself to Paris, where, as we have seen, he was arrested. The Misses Barratt were also brought to England, and bore witness, at the inquest and before the magistrates, to the disagreement which had arisen betwixt Duvalt and Berrill. It appeared they had all along strongly suspected the latter of foul play. A pistol was found in Berrill's house, hidden in the recesses of a secret closet; the maker's name was on it: he was sought, found, and was able to testify that the weapon was purchased by Mr. Berrill some four days previous to Duvalt's disappearance. A friend of the deceased deposed to having, at his request, made inquiries respecting the proceedings of Berrill with the property of his wards, and discovering that all was not right; that he knew the deceased had threatened a scrutiny; that at first he himself had suspicions of Berrill when his friend was missed; but that the behavior and demeanor of the prisoner at that time had entirely disarmed them. The scrutiny into the affairs of the young ladies, which poor Duvalt had so long ago contemplated, was now entered into with a view to discovering whether the prisoner could have had any interest in suppressing it. By this means it was found that he had, by a course of misrepresentation and chicanery, defrauded his wards of seven or eight hundred pounds annually, ever since the term of the "advantageous investment." Day by day, the evidence against the suspected man accumulated and gathered strength. He never, however, underwent more than two preliminary examinations. At these his demeanor was tranquil and attentive. After the second, however, his hope and nerve forsook him. He contrived to swallow the contents of a phial which he had managed to conceal about his person—and the justice of this world was defeated!

# Cornet Winthrop's Story.

"ONCE on a time," said Cornet Winthrop, "the quiet town of Higglesworth was frightened from its propriety by a very well authenticated apparition. It was about six feet high; had a powerful pair of whiskers, bold, joyous-looking black eyes, and the most fashionably made clothes that had ever been seen in the county. Every night, just as it became dusk, it made its appearance under the garden-wall of a fine old manor-house about half a mile from the town, paced slowly up and down for a considerable length of time, and on the approach of any passenger, either glided noiselessly past him, or, as was most commonly the case, disappeared. Various conjectures were hazarded as to this very unusual occurrence: many inquiries were made, and the conclusion to which the wise people of Higglesworth came was this—that the apparition, whatever it was, was that of a very handsome fellow, about four or five and twenty, with the pride of a bashaw and the stiffness of a Turk, from which two circumstances they unanimously decided that it had very much the appearance of a military man. It was traced to the gateway of the

Piebald Horse, the principal hostel of the borough, and, in fact, the most sceptical in such matters were convinced that the reports on this occasion, like some of the fashionable songs, were founded on facts; for the Boniface of the aforesaid hostel deposed, that for the last ten days the identical ghost had occupied his two best rooms, being No. 10 and No. 12; and, moreover, was the best judge of port wine that had ever taken up his residence in the Piebald Horse. In a few days after these facts were elicited, the phantom discontinued its appearance, but not before it was rumored, that on one or two occasions it had not 'walked' alone, but had been accompanied by another apparition in a bonnet and cloak. Whether this last circumstance was true or false, the good folks of Higglesworth never discovered; but I have every reason to believe it was true, as I have heard the story over and over again from the two persons who were principally concerned in the adventure. My friend Harry Villiers was as fine, jovial hearted a fellow as could be imagined. Some people might perhaps say he was not so clever as he might have been, as I believe he did not pretend to see much beauty in the preface to Bellendenus, never having heard of that performance, and altogether was inclined to consider the schoolmen, as he himself would have expressed it, considerable humbugs. But his judgment in horse flesh, pleasant small talk, and excellent disposition, went a great way to supply his want of appreciation of the classical merits of my old pedagogue, Dr. Parr. In the manor-house, which I have told you was about half a mile from Higglesworth, lived a gentleman of the name of Tracy, one of those characters who are commoner in life than is often imagined, who make up, by prodigious suavity to strangers, and an affectation of goodness and generosity, for the peevishness and meanness they display to their dependents. Every one was eloquent in the

praises of Mr. Tracy,—the kind, the good, the indulgent Mr. Tracy,—except his servants, whom he nearly starved, and his daughter, whom he tyrannized over as if she had been his slave. I don't exactly know whether Harry Villiers troubled his head much about the sufferings of our sable brethren in the colonies, but I know he was most indefatigable in his zeal for the emancipation of the beautiful Julia Tracy. For this purpose, he would not have grudged twenty millions out of his pocket, if he had had them; unfortunately, though he had a very decentish sort of fortune, he had neither enough to pay off the national debt, nor even, as he feared, to satisfy the expectations of the grasping and ambitious papa. However, he had one consolation, and that was, that he knew the daughter was neither grasping nor ambitious. A captaincy of dragoons, a small estate, a few thousands in cash, the strength of a Hercules, and expectations from an ancient aunt, left him very little room for care or despondency—not to mention that his fortnight's visit to the venerable borough of Higglesworth left him very little room to despair in a matter in which he was more deeply interested than even the condition of his funds.

"On mounting the coach which was to convey him to Cheltenham, his reflections were by no means unpleasant. He had no doubt of gaining the full approval of his aunt, and he was now proceeding to her house to lay the whole story of his love before her. This aunt of his, Mrs. Edward Villiers, was very well known in the gay society of the city of pumps and vanities. Fat, fair, and fifty-two, a fortune in her own right, and a surpassing genius for whist—what more had she to desire? She had everything that could conduce to happiness or comfort; and had only two impediments to her felicity, and these were a heart with the susceptibility of sixteen, and a certificate of her birth, which

was dated 1781. How she had got through the twenty years of her widowhood without a second yoke, nobody could imagine. It could not be from the circumstance of no one making her an offer, as she had seldom fewer than half a dozen, who were anxious to prove their estimation of her beauty and accomplishments by presiding at the best furnished table in Cheltenham, and taking possession of one of the prettiest estates in the county of Gloucester. Of all these obliging and disinterested offers, my friend Harry was the confidant. She never gave a decided answer, but responded to the declarations of her suitors in so very statesmanlike a manner, that the acutest of them were puzzled as to her meaning. They still lived in hope; and I suspect there were few old bachelors, who, after the first month or two of the season, did not look with very peculiar feelings on the pillared portals and beautiful plate glass windows of number twenty-four. And when, in addition, a handsome dark-brown chariot, with a knowing looking little postilion, came flashing round the corner, and pulled up at the door, in waiting for the lady of the mansion, it was astonishing to see how gouty old squires and liverless nabobs 'swaled jauntily' along the pavement, and summoned glances of intense admiration as the sweet 'cause of all their care and all their woe' tripped into the carriage as lightly as could be expected from thirteen stone and a half, and deposited herself on the cushion with a ponderosity that proved what unbounded confidence she had in the strength of the springs.

"To this lady Harry presented himself; after a *tête-à-tête* dinner, the aunt and nephew had a long and serious conversation.

"'And so you see, my dear aunt Dorothy'——

"'La! Harry, why will you always call me aunt Dorothy?—'tis such a ridiculous old-fashioned name.'

"'What shall I call you—Antiquity, or Antipathy, or what?'

"'I was christened Dorothea Leonora.'

"'Well, then, my dear Aunt Dorothea Leonora, I am going to tell you a secret.'

"'Oh, delightful—somebody else wishes to be introduced to me. Well, 'tis too bad. Is he young or old?'

"'Who?'

"'The gentleman.'

"'I haven't said a single word about a gentleman; I was only going to tell you, in return for all the confidences you have reposed in me, that I am most tremendously in love.'

"'You? how can you talk such nonsense? Such a thing is contrary to law?'

"'What is contrary to law?'

"'Why, marrying one's uncle's widow, to be sure.'

"'What the deuce do you mean? I never said a syllable about uncles or widows, or anything of the sort. Do you remember the Tracies who lived in Chamberfield house?'

"'To be sure I do,' cried Mrs. Villiers; 'what a dear, good tempered, pleasant man they say he is.'

"'Hem! do you remember his daughter?'

"'Tall—very handsome—dark eyes—I remember perfectly—rather bald, I think; with whiskers slightly grizzled.'

"Whiskers—Julia Tracy—why, aunt, you must be dreaming—I tell you she is the most beautiful little creature that fancy e'er conceived or poet feigned.'

"'Takes snuff, I recollect,' continued the widow; 'they told me he was very rich—certainly. Harry, you may bring him as soon as you like.'

"'Well, I see I must keep my secret for some other

time. You will go on talking about Mr. Tracy, when all I want you to do is to listen for a few minutes, till I have finished telling you about his daughter.'

"'Ah! poor thing, I recollect her very well. What have you to tell me of her?'

"Simply, that I hope very shortly she will stand in as near relationship to you as I do. Will you treat her well?'

"'Gracious! how you hurry one. Has Mr. Tracy empowered you to say all this?'

"'Not he—but Julia has.'

"'Indeed! I should like to be a little more acquainted with them before I decide on so important a matter.'

"'She will be as dutiful to you as if you were her mother. She has no female relation, and on that account her home is of course not so happy as it would otherwise be.'

"'She must be rather a sensible sort of person for one so young. How old is she?'

"'Not quite eighteen.'

"'Poor child! what a time she has to wait before she reaches the maturity of her charms.'

"As she said this, Mrs. Villiers looked with a benign expression at the image of a robust lady, with a red face, reflected in the opposite mirror—'Did she tell you all this herself?'

"'Every word of it, and a good deal more besides. She has a great deal of delicacy on the subject, and made a point of gaining your consent and full acquiescence before any offer was formerly made.'

"'I must make some more inquiries—are they coming again to Cheltenham?'

"'Oh, yes—and that is the reason I am so anxious to secure a favorable reception to her beforehand. Chamberfield House is let, and she tells me her father is looking out for another, if possible, in this very street.'

"'How excessively complimentary! Did you tell them I intended to leave this house for the summer, as Dr. Snatcher recommends the seaside?'

"'Oh, yes; I told her that—but I was in hopes you would remain this summer, more especially as they are coming here in a week or two. He is resolved not to be very distant. When he is within a door or two of this he will of course cultivate the acquaintance very sedulously; and if everything is settled satisfactorily, it will prevent the trouble of moving.'

"She laughed good-humoredly as he said this, and Harry was delighted with the friendliness of the manner in which she entered into his views. He had now little doubt, since he had obtained the concurrence of his aunt, that even Mr. Tracy would be satisfied with his proposals, and he accordingly prepared himself to open the siege in due form the moment that gentleman arrived.

"In the meantime, affairs at the manor-house were getting on more uncomfortably than usual. Mr. Tracy was forced to expend so much of his good-nature and pleasantry among the parties he met at dinner, that he had not a grain of any of them left for his home consumption. His harshness, in fact, seemed every hour to increase, and it was with great delight that Julia heard him announce his intention of immediately proceeding to Cheltenham. She was ordered to have all her preparations completed by a certain day, and it was resolved that he should write to the Plough, securing apartments till they could obtain a house. Julia ventured to suggest the propriety of writing to Mrs. Villiers, to ascertain whether she intended to let her mansion for the summer, and as Mr. Tracy had a particular liking to the street where it was situated, he resolved to act upon her suggestion. The letter was written, with a request that the answer might be addressed to the Plough

—the preparations were all completed, and in due course of time a handsome travelling chariot deposited the father and daughter at the door of the hotel. Not unobserved did they make their appearance, and a flush on the cheek of the young lady, and perhaps a sudden start, showed that she was not unconscious of the presence of Harry Villiers. He was now delighted with the certainty of being within a reasonable distance of the object of his admiration; every day, he felt satisfied, would throw them together, and he resolved to cultivate the friendship of the old man, in spite of the knowledge he had of the repulsiveness of his qualities.

"Buoyed up with these pleasing anticipations, he hurried off to the house of Mrs. Villiers, to announce to her the arrival of the party—but for the last few days there had been an air of mystery about that usually ingenuous lady, which puzzled him very much. On the present occasion she received his announcement with an affectation of such interesting consciousness, and made so many exclamations of wonder, surprise, and indecision, that Harry was perfectly astonished at the fuss she made about the arrival of one who was so shortly to be her niece. But his aunt's eccentricities were well known to him, and the kind way in which she spoke of Julia, the compliments she paid to her good sense and delicacy, completely reconciled him to the old lady's absurd behavior in other respects. He was particularly delighted with the interest she seemed to take in his happiness, when she told him that in order to settle the business as speedily as possible, she intended to invite Mr. Tracy to call on her the next morning; and that then, whatever arrangement was come to, the comforts of Julia should not be forgotten. With this intention she retired to her writing-desk, and after an hour or two of hard labor completed a note, addressed it to Mr. Tracy, and sent it off to

the Plough hotel. On this Harry was enraptured with the prospect of success that his aunt's co-operation afforded him, and resolved to make a formal offer of his heart and hand, as it is called, on that very day. He called on Mr. Tracy for that purpose, but found neither of them at home; he therefore thought it best to lose no time, and though he was no great penman, he managed to ask the father's consent, and assure him of his aunt's concurrence, in a very business-like manner, upon paper. His acquaintance with the father was very slight; and his love for Julia had grown up imperceptibly by their frequently meeting at the houses of mutual friends; particularly at the house of a distant relation of Julia, with whom, during her father's residence in Cheltenham, she was nearly domesticated, and who did all in her power to encourage the flirtation. Satisfied with himself, and pleased with all the world, he went to bed that night and dreamed of a parson in a white surplice, and a couple of postilions with marriage favors in their caps.

"On the following day Mrs. Villiers was all expectation. She was superbly dressed, and was all the morning in the drawing-room practising her airs and graces.

"'La! Harry,' she said, 'I wonder what can be keeping Mr. Tracy—he seems quite a man of business.'

"'How do you know?"

"'By his letter, Harry; but, la! I haven't shown you his letter yet. He comes to the point at once, and misses out all high-flown compliments about beauty, and all that sort of thing. 'Tis quite a new style of making an offer.'

"'I don't see, for my part,' replied Harry, 'what use there is in so plain a matter for ridiculous compliments on either side, between two straightforward, sensible people.'

"'Why, you know, Harry, one likes a little delicate attention; but perhaps Mr. Tracy and I had better leave little trifles of that sort to you and Julia, after we have

come to some definitive arrangement. But surely Mr. Tracy will be here immediately—hadn't you better leave me to receive him alone? It is a delicate business to manage in the presence of a third party.'

"'Ah! my dear aunt, you can't tell how much I am obliged to you for your kindness. Depend upon it, you will find Julia as grateful as possible when you have given her a happy home.'

"And so saying he left the room, and proceeded to the house of the friend where his acquaintance with Julia had commenced, and though it was still what is called early, most unaccountably, and of course unexpectedly, the first person he encountered on entering the drawing-room was Julia herself. A few words sufficed to explain, in Harry's most eloquent style, that his aunt entered warmly into his design, and had appointed a meeting that very morning with Mr. Tracy, to plead his cause as effectually as she could; and, considering that Harry was her next of kin, and that she was reputed to be enormously rich, the two sanguine young people entertained but little doubt that the sulky selfishness of the old man would be overcome, and his consent be readily obtained to their union.

"In the meantime Mr. Tracy, with his face dressed out in its sweetest smiles, presented himself in the drawing-room of Mrs. Villiers. That lady looked as sentimental as she possibly could, and the excessive politeness of the gentleman's manner, and his systematic deference and respect, added greatly to her embarrassment. After a few observations about the weather, and other matters of that kind, the old gentleman drew his chair closer to the sofa of his attentive listener, and said:

"'And now, my dear madam, will you permit me to say, that your answer to my letter was highly satisfactory to me?'

"'Oh—dear—well—but you will understand from it, Mr. Tracy, that I have said nothing definitive on the subject.'

"'Certainly—but the tone of kindness in the letter—according so well with the amiable character of the writer—and the benignant expression of her countenance—lead me to hope that the business will be quickly settled to our mutual satisfaction.'

"'Oh—dear—you rather hurry me—one can't exactly decide on so important a point. My nephew, Harry Villiers'——

"'Pardon me, my dear madam, for interrupting you,' said Mr. Tracy, making a strong effort to retain the suavity of his look and manner, 'I have received a note from him; but—the matter on which I am speaking to you just now is far more interesting to *me*.'

"'Oh, dear—you are very polite, I am sure.'

"'Have you considered the proposal I did myself the honor of making you?'

"'Oh—I assure you I value the compliment you paid me very highly, but these things require deliberation. I am not so young as I once was.'

"'Madam?'

"'The first bloom of youth is past, but I am not ignorant that many sensible men prefer a more advanced—a more mature—perhaps a more subdued period of life.'

"'Yes—precisely—a most valuable remark,' replied Mr. Tracy, looking considerably puzzled. 'This seems a very comfortable house, Mrs. Villiers.'

"'Very—I am very much attached to it, and leave it with regret, though only for a very short time.'

"'Oh, my dear madam, I should not wish to deprive you of it long.'

"'You are very obliging.'

"'I shall take particular care of this very elegant furniture.'

"'Sir?'

"'I say, that when I get possession of this house, I shall take care that the furniture suffers no damage when I am master.'

"'Really—why, 'pon my word, Mr. Tracy, you take one by surprise. I have not bound myself by what I said to you in my note, and many previous arrangements'——

"'Oh! as for that, my dear Mrs. Villiers, the details can easily be managed by our respective solicitors—papers and things of that sort drawn up—formally signed, sealed, and delivered—but I thought it was the least I could do to make you my offer in person.'

"'Nothing can be more flattering. When I have taken a little more time to think'——

"'Why, there can't be much occasion for thought. Nay, I am willing to make it a sort of provisional bargain —and to dissolve the connexion whenever you shall desire it.'

"'Mr. Tracy, I am astonished!'

"'Nay, more; my dear madam, it would perhaps really be the best plan if you were to take me on trial for a short time;—say, six weeks or two months.

"'Mr. Tracy, I am shocked.'

"'In short, my dear madam, I feel certain your good-nature will excuse me, when I tell you, that my only object in making you the offer I did, was to get possession of this house as quickly as I could.'

"'Really, sir, your language is very plain.'

"'I think, when people of our time of life enter into any business at all, we can't be too plain to each other—it prevents many disagreeable after-thoughts and misunderstandings. You know my wishes.'

"'Perfectly; after your very explicit declaration, it is impossible to mistake your meaning.'

"'Then, dear madam, answer me in one word,—will you take me on trial or not?'

"'Mr. Tracy, are you serious? I never heard of such a proposition.'

"'The commonest thing in life—I will bind myself under a penalty—but our attorneys can settle all the legal particulars. Be kind enough to let me know, in the open friendly manner you have shown all through this conference, by what time your arrangements can be completed, so as to give me possession of the house?'

"''Pon my word, Mr. Tracy, if I was surprised at the plainness and absence of compliment with which you addressed me in the first letter you sent to me from Higglesworth, the mode in which you prosecute your suit is still more unusual. One would scarcely suppose that you came here on so momentous a business as a proposal of marriage.'

"'That, my dear madam, can wait till you and I have come to some settlement upon matters more nearly concerning ourselves than the love of a thoughtless young man for a silly young woman.'

"'I understood from my nephew that your daughter's comfort was one of your principal inducements for making these proposals to me.'

"'Certainly, a comfortable home would be a great increase to her happiness, and that you have it in your power to afford her.'

"'She seems a very sensible, considerate person, and I am highly indebted to her for the favorable opinion she entertains of me; but one's own happiness is to be considered first—and till I know more of you, you will of course excuse me if I hesitate before taking so very serious a step.'

"'Serious? as what?'

"'As changing my situation.'

"'Oh! I have already told you that I wish you to do so only for a very short time.'

"'Sir? You quite amaze me—I never expected so very odd a manner of making an offer.'

"'An offer? my dear madam—an offer of what?'

"'Of marriage, to be sure.'

"'Marriage! Mrs. Villiers,—an offer of marriage?—I have certainly received a proposal for the hand of my daughter from Captain Villiers, your nephew—but that is the only offer of the kind I am at present acquainted with.'

"'Indeed!' said Mrs. Villiers, 'and pray what was your intention in sending me a letter which I received from you, dated from your estate at Higglesworth.'

"'Madam, I took the liberty of offering myself as tenant of this house, as I understood you were anxious to visit the sea-side for a few months. You held out every prospect of acceding to my wishes, in the answer you addressed to me at the Plough Hotel. I was in hopes, as you invited me to visit you to-day, it was to fulfil my expectations in this respect; but I fear, madam, your thoughts are so filled with the proposals of your nephew, which I understand have met with your full sanction, that'——

"'Proposals of my nephew! I never heard of them.'

"'Indeed? Then my answer to the young gentleman shall be very succinct and intelligible. Will you allow me in the meantime to wish you a very good morning?' And bowing in a very stately manner to the astonished Mrs. Villiers, he smiled benignly, and stalked out of the apartment.

"'Well,' said the lady, when she was left alone, 'if this isn't a very puzzling piece of business I don't know what is. Here comes a gentleman, after writing me a de-

claration, and after receiving an answer to it, leaving him in doubt whether he is accepted or not—and tells me, after a deal of rudeness about marrying him on trial, that his whole object in writing me that letter was to gain possession of my house. I wish Harry Villiers would come home.' And at her wish, her nephew appeared.

"'I am come, my dear aunt, to thank you again for your kindness, and to hear the issue of your interview with Mr. Tracy.' Mrs. Villiers made no answer to this, but pulled a letter out of her reticule, put it into her nephew's hand, and said, 'read this, and tell me what you think of it.' He did as he was commanded, and read as follows.

"'*Higglesworth Manor-house.*

"'It would perhaps require an apology if I, a comparative stranger, took the liberty of addressing a lady on a subject in which I am deeply interested; but to you, my dear Mrs. Villiers, I open myself at once—relying on your good-nature and willingness to oblige. In what I am about to say, I proceed on the supposition that you are as anxious for a change as I am. We both suffer from the solitude of our situations; and at this season of the year Cheltenham itself must be as dull and uninteresting as the retirement from which I write. One of my objects in making my proposal to you, is to secure a comfortable home for my daughter. A house so replete with the elegances which have been procured by the taste of Mrs. Villiers must be admirably suited for this purpose. Perhaps we might arrange matters to our mutual satisfaction, if you would allow me to make you mistress of Higglesworth Manor-house, while you installed me as master of Number Twenty-four. On this and all other matters, when we proceed to final settlements, you will find me disposed to be liberal. I will not conceal from you that I am anxious to come to a con-

clusion as speedily as possible; and if you will write to me —addressed to the Plough Hotel—whether I may hope to succeed in my suit, you will confer a great obligation on, madam, your most devoted, humble servant,

"'FREDERICK TRACY.'

"'There!' cried Mrs. Villiers—'what do you think of that?'

"'Why, that it is a piece of hypocritical rigmarole; why did he not apply to your agent at once?'

"'Why should he apply to my agent?'

"'To ascertain your terms, to be sure.'

"'Harry, Harry, you're as bad as Mr. Tracy—you have read the old gentleman's letter—what is it?—what does he want?'

"'He wants to take your house, to be sure, for the summer months; for I told Julia you were going to the sea-side.'

"'Oh dear—well—did I ever—well—if that isn't—what shall I do? What will he think?'

"'Why, what's the matter, aunt?—what have you done?'

"'Done!—why, I've answered his letter as if it had been an offer of marriage, and not a bargain about my house. Dear, dear! what shall I do?'

"'Let me see what you said in your answer,' said Harry, almost in convulsions of laughter at the perplexities of his aunt. She gave him a copy of the epistle she had addressed to Mr. Tracy, and he read—

"'Sir,—I cannot help thanking you for the honor you have done me in asking my assistance to make your daughter's home happy. The house is a very comfortable one; and I will not deny that Higglesworth Manor-house, to one

so fond of the country as I am, has considerable attractions; but we will leave these things for after deliberations. Perhaps a personal interview would answer our purposes better than a correspondence; and if you will do me the honor to call on me to-morrow at twelve or one o'clock, I shall perhaps have it in my power to give Miss Tracy a comfortable home, by an arrangement which will meet with the approbation of all parties.—I remain, your obedient servant,

"'DOROTHEA LEONORA VILLIERS.'

"At the moment that Harry finished the reading of this statesmanlike document, a servant entered the room, and presented him with a note. It was from old Tracy, and was in these words:—

"'Sir,—In consequence of a very extraordinary interview I had this day with your aunt, in which she professed an entire ignorance of your having honored Miss Tracy with the offer of your hand, I beg, on the part of my daughter, to decline your further acquaintance; and I have the honor to be, sir, &c.

"'FREDERICK TRACY.'

"What the devil is this you've been doing?' cried Harry. 'Did I not tell you that Julia insisted on my getting a promise of a kind reception from you before she would allow matters to go any further?'

"'Yes—but la! now only think—I really thought she had sent me that message in consequence of knowing that her father intended to ask me to become her stepmother.'

"'The deuce you did! and so with your nonsense about marrying old Tracy, you have destroyed my happiness and Julia's!'

"'No—I haven't—and now that I think of it, it will get

me out of the absurd scrape I have got into, if I write to Mr. Tracy in your behalf.'

"'Will you?—Then never mind what has happened—you are a dear good-tempered old soul after all; and if you think old Tracy has treated you ill in any respect, I'll call the old rascal out—though, unfortunately, it is not the fashion to shoot one's father-in-law.'

"Matters were soon settled to the satisfaction of all parties. Mrs. Villiers retained her house in Cheltenham, and the young people built a capital new mansion on her property in the vale of Gloucester, where they live—as the nursery stories used to end—as happy as the day is long. And so, gentlemen, there is an end to my story."

# Opposite Neighbors.

It was on a pouring wet morning in the end of the month of March, 1817, that I sat drowsily ensconced in a "Woodburn" beside the fire in my *study* (!) in a front room in Upper Brook street; for I am in easy circumstances, and rent "a suite of apartments fit for the immediate reception of an M.P. or bachelor of fashion," in the house of a "professional man of celebrity, who has no family." I had spelt through two newspapers, even to the last resource of "Rowland's Kalydor" and "Gowland's Lotion." I had read and dozed over every article in the last page of my last paper, until I caught myself reading the small printed prices of the markets—potatoes at 8s. and 6d.

I began to feel as hunting gentlemen do during a hard frost—what is called "hard up." I had stirred my fire till it was out; and yawned until I began to fear a locked-jaw. In very despair I strolled to the window, hopeless as I was of seeing anything more amusing than overflowing gutters, half-drowned sparrows, or a drenched apothecary's boy. It was early in the morning, at least in a London morning, and I could not even anticipate the relief of a close carriage,

with an oil-skin hammer-cloth, driven by: what then was my delight when, at one glance, as I reached the window, I descried that the bills in a large and handsome house opposite had been taken down! Now, do not suppose that I love to pry into my neighbors' affairs for the sake of gossip—far from it; but what is an honest bachelor gentleman to do on a rainy morning, if he may not pick up a small matter of amusement by watching his opposite neighbors now and then?

The houses opposite were worse than no houses at all; for one was inhabited by an old and infirm lady, who had no visitors but an M.D., an apothecary, and a man in a shovel-hat. The other house contained only an elderly and very quiet couple, who had not near so much variety as a clock: they never stopped—never went too fast or too slow—never wanted winding up—they went of themselves—their breakfast and dinner bells rang daily to a minute at half-past eight and at six o'clock—their fat coachman and fat horses came to the door precisely at two o'clock to take them out, always to the Regent's Park, and drove twice round the outer circle. I took care to inquire into that fact. I ascertained, too, for certain, that they had a leg of mutton for dinner every Tuesday and Friday, and fish three times a week, including Sundays, on which day, too, the butcher always brought roasting beef—always the thick part of the sirloin. What could I do with such people as these? I gave them up as hopeless.

Preparations for the reception of a family in my favorite house now went on with great spirit; a thorough internal cleaning and scouring on the first day; on the second, all the windows were cleaned. I could stand it no longer, and, snatching up my hat, I just stepped over *promiscuously* to ask the maid, who was washing the steps, by whom the house was taken. She was a stupid, ignorant, country girl,

and did not seem at all alive to the interest attaching to her examination. I, however, discovered that—the house was taken by a baronet, and that his family consisted of his lady and one child (a boy), and his wife's sister.

I took a few turns in the Park, and just as I rapped at my own door, I determined I would make no further inquiries concerning the expected family—no, it would be infinitely more interesting to discover everything by my own penetration and ingenuity; it would be a nice employment for me, for I was dreadfully at a loss for something to do, and would keep me from falling asleep.

I began now to count the hours. I was afraid of stirring from the window lest the strangers should escape my vigilance, and arrive unknown to me. I even dined in my study; and here, by the way, I must let the reader into a little secret. I had a large wire blind fixed on one of my windows, behind which I could stand and direct my inquiries unseen by anybody, though few within range were unseen by me.

A few days passed slowly on. Muslin curtains were put up, not *blinds*, fortunately for me (I have a mortal antipathy to blinds to any windows but my own), boxes of mignonette appeared in every window. A cart from Colville's in the King's Road, filled with Persian lilacs, moss roses, and heliotropes, unladed its sweets at the door. They had then a rural taste; country people, perhaps; and I sighed as I figured to myself a bevy of plump rosy misses in pink and green, and one or two young squires in green coats and top boots. The arrival, whatever it might be, must be drawing very near—nearer and nearer—for a respectable looking housekeeper made her appearance one morning at the window, who had stolen a march on me; I never could make that out, for I had never seen her arrive. Two or three maids also were flitting about, and a gentleman out of

livery appeared, now at the area, and now at the hall door, superintending the unpacking of a grand pianoforte from Broadwood's; then arrived a cart from Brecknell and Turner, wax-chandlers in the Haymarket; and one from Fortnum and Mason's in Piccadilly, with divers other carts and packages of minor consideration. Then came hackney coaches, with servants and colored paper boxes—smart looking maids in Leghorn bonnets and drab shawls, and footmen in dark green, and very plain liveries. The family could not be far behind. At last, about four o'clock, the fish arrived—a turbot and two fine lobsters for sauce. I can be on my oath it was not a brill, and fish was very dear that morning, for I inquired; therefore, that could not be for the servants; Sir Charles and family must be close at hand.

I remained rooted to the window, and was soon rewarded for my patient investigation, by hearing, at about six o'clock, a carriage driving rapidly up the street from Park Lane. It was them actually. A green travelling carriage, all over imperials, stopped at the door in good earnest, most beautifully splashed with mud—no arms—only a bird for the crest; four post horses, and a maid and man servant in the rumble. My heart beat thick, my eyes strained in my head lest any one of the inmates of the carriage should escape my vigilance. The hall doors were thrown open in an instant, and the gentleman out of livery, with two of his colleagues, flew out to assist the ladies to alight. First of all a gentleman—Sir Charles, of course—made his appearance, tall, and very distinguished looking, dressed in a brown frock coat and dark fur travelling cap, and apparently about thirty years of age. Next came a lady who skipped out very lightly, and who seemed rather in a hurry to see the new abode—that was the *sister*. She was thin, and very graceful, and wrapped in a white cachemere, with

rather a narrow border; her features were hidden from my view, as she wore one of these plaguey large coarse straw bonnets, tied down with white satin ribbons—two bows, and the edges cut in vandykes. Another lady then descended, more slowly and carefully, and as she watched the alighting of a nurse who had deposited a fine rosy boy, about a twelvemonth old, into the arms of Sir Charles, I observed that she was evidently about to increase her family; therefore, I had already ascertained, beyond a doubt, which was the wife, and which was the wife's sister. The doors then closed, and I saw no more that evening, excepting that the lamp was lit in the dining-room, and the shutters closed at seven o'clock, and then in the gloom I saw three figures descend the stairs, from which I concluded they all went to dinner; besides the turbot, they had house lamb and asparagus.

The next morning, while dressing, I espied the sister, whom I shall call Ellen, standing on the balcony admiring and arranging the flowers. The morning was beautiful and very light, so that I had a perfect view of her. It was impossible that a more lovely creature could be seen. She appeared not more than sixteen or seventeen; indeed, from the extreme plainness of her dress, I suspected she had not quite left the school-room. She was rather above the middle height, very slight and graceful, bright and beautiful, with long light auburn curls, and a very patrician air about her. Had I been young and romantic, I should most assuredly have fallen in love on the instant, as she stooped over the balcony with a most enchanting air, smiling and kissing her hand to the baby, whom his nurse, at that moment, carried out of the hall door for an early walk in the park.

Presently she was joined by her sister, whom I shall call Lady Seymour, and who evidently came to summon

her to breakfast. She appeared about twenty-five or twenty-six years old; pale, interesting, and beautiful; had a mild and pensive, I almost thought a melancholy look, and seemed very quiet and gentle in all her movements.

I should have been inclined to fall in love with her too, if she had not been a married woman, and I had not seen Ellen first; but Ellen was by far the more beautiful of the two fair sisters—the most striking, the most animated, and I always admired animation, for it argues inquiry, and from inquiry springs knowledge. The ladies lingered, and stooped down to inhale the fragrance of their flowers, until Sir Charles appeared to summon them, and the whole trio descended to breakfast, Lady Seymour leaning on the arm of her husband, and Ellen skipping down before them. Sir Charles was very handsome, very tall, and very dignified looking. Nothing could be more promising than the appearance of the whole party. I was delighted with the prospect; no more gaping over newspapers; adieu *ennui*, here was food for reflection. My mind was now both actively and usefully employed, and a transition from idleness to useful occupation is indeed a blessing.

Days flew on, and I gradually gathered much important and curious information. The Seymours had many visitors; a vast proportion of coroneted carriages among them; went regularly to the opera. I could not make out who was Ellen's harp-master; but Crivelli taught her singing, from which I argued their good taste. She went out to evening parties; I concluded therefore that she had only just *come out*, and was still pursuing her education. A green britska and chariot were in requisition for both ladies, as the day was fine or otherwise; a dark cab with a green page attended Sir Charles on some days, on others he rode a bay horse with black legs, and a star on his forehead. With respect to the general habits of the family,

they were early risers, and dined at eight o'clock. The beautiful baby was the pet of both ladies, and lived chiefly in the drawing-room; and I observed that Ellen frequently accompanied him and his nurse in their early walks, attended by a footman.

The Seymours occupied the whole of my time; I gave up all parties for the present, on the score of business, and I assure you it was quite as much as one person could do conveniently to look to them. From discoveries I made, the family speedily became very interesting to me, I may say painfully interesting. Now I am not at all given to romance or high-flying notions, seeing that I am but seldom known to invent anything; what I am about to relate may safely be relied on as the result of an accurate though painful investigation.

Before communicating these discoveries to my readers, I pause, even on the threshold. I have endeavored to bespeak their interest for the fair Ellen, as I felt a deep one for her myself, but—truth must out—it is my duty.

From the first day of the arrival of the Seymours, as I shall continue to designate them, I had been struck by the evident dejection of Lady Seymour. I frequently observed her, when alone, bury her face in her hands, as she leant upon a small table beside the couch on which she sat.

The work, or the book, or the pencil—for she drew—was invariably thrown aside when her husband or her young sister quitted the apartment. The fine little baby seemed her greatest pleasure. He was a wild, struggling little fellow, full of health and spirits, almost too much for her delicate frame, and apparently weak state of health. She could not herself nurse him long together, but I observed that the nurse was very frequently in the room with her, and that the fond mother followed and watched her little darling almost constantly. She was surrounded

by luxuries—by wealth. Her husband, in appearance at least, was one whom all women must admire; one of whom a wife might feel proud; she had a beautiful child; she was young, lovely, titled. What then could be the cause of this dejection? What could it be? I redoubled my attention: I was the last to retire, and the first to rise. I determined to discover this mystery.

One morning I discovered her weeping—weeping bitterly. Her bedroom was in the front of the house; she was walking backwards and forwards between the window and the open folding doors, her handkerchief at her eyes. At first I thought she might have the toothache—not being given, as I before said, to romance; then I suspected her confinement was about to take place—but no, that could not be. No Mr. Blagden appeared—his carriage had not been at her door for more than a week: at which I was rather surprised. She was evidently and decidedly weeping—I ascertained that beyond a doubt. A flash of light beamed across my mind. I have it! thought I; perhaps her husband's affections are estranged. Could it be possible? Husbands are wayward things—I felt glad that I was not a husband.

A kind of disagreeable and tormenting suspicion at that moment strengthened my belief; a suspicion that—how shall I speak of it?—perhaps he might love the beautiful Ellen. I tried to banish the idea; but circumstances, lightly passed over before, returned now in crowds to my recollection, to confirm me in it. From that moment I renewed my observations daily, and with still increased vigilance, and was obliged to come to the painful conclusion, that my suspicions were not only but too well founded with regard to Sir Charles, but that Ellen returned his passion. Yes; she was romantically in love with the husband of her sister! I seldom find myself wrong in my

opinions, yet in this case I would willingly have given five hundred pounds to feel sure that I was in error. Such was the interest with which the extreme beauty, the vivacity and grace, of the youthful Ellen had inspired me. Here then was food for philosophy as well as reflection. Who shall say that inquirers are impertinent, when such facts as these can be elicited? Had it not been for me—such is the apathy of people about what does not concern them—a base husband, and an artful and intriguing sister, might still have maintained a fair face to the world. But I was determined to cut the matter short, and open the eyes of the deluded wife as to the real extent of her injury. Honor compelled me to it. Let not the reader think me rash—I will explain the circumstance which influenced my convictions. Oh, Ellen! how I have been deceived in thee! How hast thou betrayed a too susceptible heart!

Sir Charles was an M.P., which my ingenuity in setting together hours and facts enabled me to make sure of. He frequently returned late from the debates in the House. The weather grew warm, and the shutters were always left open till the family retired for the night. Their lamps were brilliant, and I could discern the fair Ellen peeping over the balustrades of the staircase, and lingering and waiting on the landing-place, evidently on the look-out for an anxiously expected arrival. Then the cab of Sir Charles would stop at the door—his well known knock would be heard, and Ellen would fly with the lightness of a fairy to meet him as he ascended the stairs. He would then fold her in his arms, and they would enter the drawing-room together; yet, before they did so, five or ten minutes' *tête-à-tête* frequently took place on the landing, and the arm of Sir Charles was constantly withdrawn from the waist of Ellen before they opened the drawing-room door and appeared in the presence of the poor neglected wife, whom he

greeted with no embrace, as he took his seat beside her on the sofa.

For some time I set down the *empressements* of Ellen to meet Sir Charles as that of a lively and affectionate girl to greet her sister's husband, in the manner she would receive her own brother. I was soon obliged to think differently.

When Ellen played on the harp, which she did almost daily, Sir Charles would stand listening beside her, and would frequently imprint a kiss on her beautiful brow, gently lifting aside the curls which covered it; but this *never* took place when Lady Seymour was in the room—mark that—no, not in a single instance. Sir Charles sometimes sat reading in a chair near the drawing-room window, and would, as Ellen passed him, fondly draw her towards him and hold her hands, while he appeared to converse with her in the most animated manner. If the door opened, and the poor wife came in, the hands were instantly released.

As the spring advanced, the appearance of Lady Seymour, and more frequent visits of Mr. Blagden, led me to suppose her confinement drew near; she became later in rising in the morning, and Sir Charles and Ellen almost constantly took a very early *tête-à-tête* walk in the park, from which they usually returned long before Lady Seymour made her appearance in the drawing-room.

A very handsome man, with a viscount's coronet on his cab, was a frequent visitor in Upper Brook street. I doubted not but that he was an admirer of and suitor to the fair Ellen. Yet she slighted him; he was entirely indifferent to her: otherwise why did she often leave the drawing-room during his very long morning visits, and sit reading in the window of a room up-stairs, or playing with the baby in the nursery, leaving her sister to entertain him? The reason was too evident. Cruel and heartless

Ellen! My heart bled more and more for the poor wife; I absolutely began to hate Ellen.

At length closed bed-room shutters, hurry and bustle, cartloads of straw, and the galloping chariot of Mr. Blagden, announced the accouchement of Lady Seymour. All seemed happily over before the house was closed for the night.

Sir Charles and Ellen were in the drawing-room together. The lady's maid rushed into the apartment; I almost fancied I heard her exclaim, "My lady is safe, and a fine boy." So well did the deceitful Ellen act her joy, she clasped her hands together, and then, in the apparent delight of her heart, shook hands with the maid, who left the room directly. My heart was relenting towards her, as she was flying to follow the woman, no doubt with the intention of hastening to the bedside of her sister; but no—she returned to tenderly embrace Sir Charles before she quitted the drawing-room. At such a time too! Oh, faithless and cruel Ellen!

Sir Charles and Ellen were now more frequently together—more in love than ever. They sang together, read together, walked together, played with the little boy together, and nursed the new little baby in turns.

In due course of time poor Lady Seymour recovered, and resumed her station in the drawing-room, and then Sir Charles was less frequently at home. I was furious at him as well as Ellen. All my tender compassion and interest centred in the unhappy and neglected wife.

One other instance in corroboration of the justness of my suspicions I will relate. A miniature painter, whom I knew by sight, came early every morning to the house. Sir Charles was sitting for his picture. One morning, when I concluded it must be nearly finished, Sir Charles and the artist left the house together. I saw the picture lying o

the table near the window, in the same spot where the artist had been working at it for nearly two hours before, while Sir Charles was sitting to him. I had not for a moment lost sight of it, and am ready to affirm upon oath that the miniature was the likeness of Sir Charles, and of no one else; for you must know that I have a small pocket telescope by which I can detect these nice points accurately. Well.—Miss Ellen came into the room;—she was alone;—she walked up to the picture, gazed on it for a long while, and —will it be believed! pressed it several times to her lips and then to her heart!—Yes, I am quite sure she pressed it to her heart; no one can deceive me in that particular. She did not indeed think or guess that any eye observed her —but oh!—Ellen, there was an eye over you that never slumbered, at least very seldom. Things had thus arrived at such a pass, that concealment on my part would have been criminal. My duty was clear,—an instant exposure without regard to the feelings of any one. But how could it be accomplished without personal danger! Sir Charles was a shot. I had seen a case of pistols arrive from John Martin and Son, Dover street; besides, he was big enough to eat me, so that putting myself forward was out of the question. I had it—I would write to the *Times* and the *True Sun*, under the signature of "A Friend to Morality." That very night I condensed these notes into three columns, as I said to the editor, not to occupy too great a space in his valuable journal: and early on the following morning I rose to dispatch my letters, when what should greet my astonished senses, but, at the door of the Seymours, their travelling carriage with four post horses! What could it mean? I stood perfectly aghast; my eyes were fixed intently upon the carriage.—Oh! I had it again, never fail me—the murder was out. I need not to the *Times*. Miss Ellen was discovered, and going

to be sent off to school, or perhaps to "dull aunts and croaking rooks" in the country! I was glad to be spared the pain of forwarding the explanation; and yet—good heavens! what was my surprise and profound mystification when Sir Charles appeared, handing in, first Lady Seymour, a beautiful flush on her countenance, radiant with smiles, and almost as quick and light in her movements as Ellen herself—then the old nurse with the new baby: then Ellen smiling as usual; and last of all Sir Charles got upon the box, followed by the viscount!! and then off they drove as fast as the horses could carry them. My eyes and mouth continued wide open long after they had turned the corner into Park Lane. I was at my wits' end; at sea without a rudder. What could all this possibly portend? The little boy was left behind too! and all the servants, with the exception of one of the lady's maids, and Sir Charles's own man. Could it be that Ellen was going to be palmed off upon the poor deceived Viscount? But why then should they go out of town to be married? Why had I not seen the least glimpse of a lawyer, or any preparation for a *trousseau?* and why did the new baby go with them? *that* could not be of much use at a wedding. No, that *could* not be it. Where *could* they be going? I passed a restless day, a sleepless night. The next morning I grew desperate, and was on the point of sallying forth in my cap and dressing-gown to knock at the door of the deserted mansion, and demand satisfaction of the butler, when whom should I pounce upon at the door, but my old friend General Crossby. It was devilish unlucky, but I was obliged to ask him up.

"I intended to call on my friends the St. Legers, over the way, this morning," said he, "but I find they are gone to Portsmouth."

"To Portsmouth, are they? that's very curious," said I,

interrupting him. "Do you know the family?" asked I, with something like agitation.

"I have known Sir Charles St. Leger all his life; he married Fanny Spenser, a daughter of Admiral Spenser."

"Good God!"

"Why are you surprised?" asked he gravely.

"Why, General, I must be candid with you; truth and honor compel me to a disclosure, which, I am sure, will, as a friend of the family, cause you exceeding pain." The General was now surprised in his turn.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "Nothing has happened to Mrs. Murray or child, I hope."

"I don't know who you mean by Mrs. Murray," I replied, with great seriousness. "It is of Lady St. Leger and her sister that I am about to speak." And I then told him every circumstance of guilt, with its corroborating proofs, to which I had been so unwilling a witness; I told him all without disguise; to all of which he listened, as I thought, very calmly, apathetically indeed considering he was a friend of the family; but on the conclusion of my recital, to my great dismay he arose, put on his hat, and looking at me sternly, said, "Sir, the lady whom you have thus honored by so great a share of your attention is not the intriguante you suppose, is not the paramour of Sir Charles St. Leger, but is no other than his *wife* and my god-daughter.—I wish you, Sir, a good morning."

"Wife! God-daughter!" I repeated in a faint voice. "But, General, for God's sake, one instant, the elder lady?" "Is Lady St. Leger's elder sister, the wife of the gallant Captain Murray, whose absence on service she has been for some time lamenting. His ship has arrived at Portsmouth, and they are all gone to meet him." He had reached the door; I was in an agony; my hair stood on end:—"One word more, the Viscount?" "Is Captain

Murray's elder brother. And before I take my leave, permit me to wish you a better occupation than clandestinely watching the actions of others, misinterpreting the actions of an amiable and virtuous lady, and traducing the character of an estimable man, whose refinement of feeling you have neither mind to understand nor appreciate. Sir, I wish you again a good morning."

What would I not have given at that moment of shame to have been on my travels down the bottomless pit! Anywhere rather than on the first floor at Brook street. I was positively at my wits' end.

I hung my head, completely abashed, discomfited—I had nothing to say, absolutely not a word—and was thoroughly ashamed of myself and my ingenuity. Had I possessed a tail, I should have slunk off with it hanging down between my legs, in the manner I have seen a discomfited dog do: but I had no such expressive appendage, and I could only ejaculate to myself at intervals during the whole of the next three days—

"God bless my soul! what a false scent I have been on! And for a bachelor gentleman too, not at all given to invention! Yet how was I to guess that a wife could be in love with her husband? There *is* some excuse for me after all. God bless my soul!"

P. S. The St. Legers are returned—Captain Murray is with them—French blinds are putting up all over the house, "Othello's occupation's gone."

# A Night Adventure.

I WILL tell you all about an affair—important as it proved to me; but you must not hurry me. I have never been in a hurry since then, and never will. Up to that time inclusive, I was always in a hurry; my actions always preceded my thoughts; experience was of no use; and anybody would have supposed me destined to carry a young head upon old shoulders to the grave. However, I was brought up at last "with a round turn." I was allowed a certain space for reflection, and plenty of materials; and if it did not do me good, it's a pity!

My father and mother both died when I was still a great awkward boy; and I, being the only thing they had to bequeathe, became the property of a distant relation. I do not know how it happened, but I had no near relations. I was a kind of waif upon the world from the beginning; and I suppose it was owing to my having no family anchorage that I acquired the habit of swaying to and fro, and drifting hither and thither, at the pleasure of wind and tide. Not that my guardian was inattentive or unkind—quite the reverse; but he was indolent and careless, contenting him-

self with providing abundantly for my schooling and my pocket, and leaving everything else to chance. He would have done the same thing to his own son if he had had one, and he did the same thing to his own daughter. But girls somehow cling wherever they are cast—anything is an anchorage for them; and as Laura grew up, she gave the care she had never found, and was the little mother of the whole house. As for the titular mother, she had not an atom of character of any kind. She might have been a picture, or a vase, or anything else that is useless except to the taste or the affections. But mamma was indispensable. It is a vulgar error to suppose that people who have nothing in them are nobody in a house. Our mamma was the very centre and point of our home feelings; and it was strange to observe the devout care we took of a personage who had not two ideas in her head.

It is no wonder that I was always in a hurry, for I must have had an instinctive idea that I had my fortune to look for. The governor had nothing more than a genteel independence, and this would be a good deal lessened after his death by the lapse of an annuity. But sister Laura was thus provided for well enough, while I had not a shilling in actual money, although plenty of hypothetical thousands, and sundry castles in the air. It was the consciousness of the latter kind of property, no doubt, that gave me so free and easy an air, and made me so completely the master of my own actions. How I did worry that blessed old woman! how Laura lectured and scolded! how the governor stormed! and how I was forgiven the next minute, and we were all as happy again as the day was long! But at length the time of separation came. I had grown a great hulking fellow, strong enough to make my bread as a porter if that had been needed; and so a situation was found for me in a counting-house at Barcelona, and after a lecture and a

hearty cry from sister Laura, a blessing and a kiss from mamma, and a great sob kept down by a hurricane laugh from the governor, I went adrift.

Four years passed rapidly away. I had attained my full height, and more than my just share of inches. I already enjoyed a fair modicum of whisker, and had even made some progress in the cultivation of a pair of moustaches, when suddenly the house I was connected with failed. What to do? The governor insisted upon my return to England, where his interest among the mercantile class was considerable; Laura hinted mysteriously that my presence in the house would soon be a matter of great importance to her father; and mamma let out the secret, by writing to me that Laura was going to "change her condition." I was glad to hear this, for I knew he would be a model of a fellow who was Laura's husband; and, gulping down my pride, which would fain have persuaded me that it was unmanly to go back again like the ill sixpence, I set out on my return home.

The family, I knew, had moved to another house; but being well acquainted with the town, I had no difficulty in finding the place. It was a range of handsome buildings which had sprung up in the fashionable outskirt during my absence; and although it was far on in the evening, my accustomed eyes soon descried through the gloom the governor's old-fashioned door-plate. I was just about to knock, really agitated with delight and struggling memories, when a temptation came in my way. One of the area-windows was open, gaping as if for my reception. A quantity of plate lay upon a table close by. Why should I not enter, and appear unannounced in the drawing-room, a sunburnt phantom of five feet eleven? Why should I not present the precise and careful Laura with a handful of her own spoons and forks, left so conveniently at the service of

any area-sneak who might chance to pass by? Why? That is only a figure of speech. I asked no question about the matter; the idea was hardly well across my brain when my legs were across the rails. In another moment, I had crept in by the window; and chuckling at my own cleverness, and the great moral lesson I was about to teach, I was stuffing my pockets with the plate.

While thus engaged, the opening of a door in the hall above alarmed me; and afraid of the failure of my plan, I stepped lightly up the stair, which was partially lighted by the hall-lamp. As I was about to emerge at the top, a serving-girl was coming out of a room on the opposite side. She instantly retreated, shut the door with a bang, and I could hear a half-suppressed hysterical cry. I bounded on, sprang up the drawing-room stair, and entered the first door at a venture. All was dark, and I stopped for a moment to listen. Lights were hurrying across the hall; and I heard the rough voice of a man as if scolding and taunting some person. The girl had doubtless given the alarm, although her information must have been very indistinct; for when she saw me I was in the shadow of the stair, and she could have had little more than a vague impression that she beheld a human figure. However this may be, the man's voice appeared to descend the stair to the area-room, and presently I heard a crashing noice, not as if he was counting the plate, but rather thrusting it aside *en masse*. Then I heard the window closed, the shutters bolted, and an alarm-bell hung upon them, and the man reascended the stair, half scolding, half laughing at the girl's superstition. He took care, notwithstanding, to examine the fastenings of the street-door, and even to lock it, and put the key in his pocket. He then retired into a room, and all was silence.

I began to feel pretty considerably queer. The governor

kept no male servant that I knew of, and had never done so. It was impossible he could have introduced this change into his household without my being informed of it by sister Laura, whose letters were an exact chronicle of everything, down to the health of the cat. This was puzzling. And now that I had time to think, the house was much too large for a family requiring only three sleeping-rooms, even when I was at home. It was what is called a double house, with rooms on both sides of the hall; and the apartment on the threshold of which I was still lingering appeared, from the dim light of the windows, to be of very considerable size. I now recollected that the quantity of plate I had seen—a portion of which at this moment felt preternaturally heavy in my pockets—must have been three times greater than any the governor ever possessed, and that various pieces were of a size and massiveness I had never before seen in the establishment. In vain I bethought myself that I had seen and recognised the well known door-plate, and that the area from which I entered was immediately under; in vain I argued that since Laura was about to be married, the extra quantity of plate might be intended to form a part of her *trousseau:* I could not convince myself. But the course of my thoughts suggested an idea, and pulling hastily from my pocket a tablespoon, I felt, for I could not see, the legend which contained my fate. But my fingers were tremulous: they seemed to have lost sensation—only I fancied I did feel something more than the governor's plain initials. There was still a light in the hall. If I could but bring that spoon within its illumination! All was silent; and I ventured to descend step after step—not as I had bounded up, but with the stealthy pace of a thief, and the plate growing heavier and heavier in my pocket. At length I was near enough to see, in spite of a dimness that had gathered over my eyes; and, with a sensation of absolute

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faintness, I beheld upon the spoon an engraved crest—the red right hand of a baronet!

I crept back again, holding by the banisters, fancying every now and then that I had heard a door open behind me, and yet my feet no more consenting to quicken their motion than if I had been pursued by a murderer in the nightmare. I at length got into the room, groped for a chair, and sat down. No more hurry now. Oh, no! There was plenty of time; and plenty to do in it, for I had to wipe away the perspiration that ran down my face in streams. What was to be done? What *had* I done? Oh, a trifle, a mere trifle. I had only sneaked into a gentleman's house by the area-window, and pocketed his table-spoons; and here I was, locked and barred and belled in, sitting very comfortably, in the dark and alone, in his drawing-room. Very particularly comfortable. What a capital fellow, to be sure! What an amusing personage! Wouldn't the baronet laugh in the morning? Wouldn't he ask me to stay to breakfast? And wouldn't I eat heartily out of the spoons I had stolen? But what name is that? Who calls me a housebreaker? Who gives me in charge? Who lugs me off by the neck? I will not stand it. I am innocent, except of breaking into a baronet's house. I am a gentleman, with another gentleman's spoons in my pocket. I claim the protection of the law. Police! police!

My brain was wandering. I pressed my hand upon my wet forehead, to keep down the thick-coming fancies, and determined, for the first time in my life, to hold a deliberate consultation with myself. I was in an awkward predicament—it was impossible to deny the fact; but was there anything really serious in the case? I had unquestionably descended into the wrong area, the right hand one instead of the left hand one; but was I not as unquestionably the

relation—the distant relation—the very distant relation—of the next-door neighbor? I had been four years absent from his house, and was there anything more natural than that I should desire to pay my next visit through a subterranean window? I had appropriated, it is true, a quantity of silver-plate I had found; but with what other intention could I have done this than to present it to my very distant relation's daughter, and reproach her with her carelessness in leaving it next door? Finally, I was snared, caged, trapped—door and window had been bolted upon me without any remonstrance on my part—and I was now some considerable time in the house, unsuspected, yet a prisoner. The position was serious; but come, suppose the worst, that I was actually laid hold of as a malefactor, and commanded to give an account of myself. Well: I was, as aforesaid, a distant relation of the individual next door. I belonged to nobody in the world, if not to him; I bore but an indifferent reputation in regard to steadiness; and after four years' absence in a foreign country, I had returned idle, penniless, and objectless—just in time to find an area window open in the dusk of the evening, and a heap of plate lying behind it, within view of the street.

This self-examination was not encouraging; the case was decidedly queer; and as I sat thus pondering in the dark, with the spoon in my hand, I am quite sure that no malefactor in a dungeon could have envied my reflections. In fact, the evidence was so dead against me, that I began to doubt my own innocence. What was I here for if my intentions had really been honest? Why should I desire to come into any individual's area-window instead of the door? And how came it that all this silver-plate had found its way into my pockets? I was angry as well as terrified: I was judge and criminal in one; but the instincts of nature got the better of my sense of justice, and I rose suddenly up

to ascertain whether it was not possible to get from the window into the street.

As I moved, however, the horrible booty I had in my pockets moved likewise, appearing to me to shriek, like a score of fiends, "Police! police!" and the next instant I heard a quick footstep ascending the stair. Now was the fearful moment come! I was on my feet; my eyes glared upon the door; my hands were clenched; the perspiration had dried suddenly upon my skin; and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. But the footstep, accompanied by a gleam of light, passed—passed; and from very weakness I sat down again, with a dreadful indifference to the screams of the plate in my pockets. Presently there were more footsteps along the hall; then voices; then drawing of bolts and creaking of locks; then utter darkness, then silence—lasting, terrible, profound. The house had gone to bed; the house would quickly be asleep; it was time to be up and doing. But first and foremost, I must get rid of the plate. Without that hideous *corpus delicti*, I should have some chance. I must, at all hazards, creep down into the hall, find my way to the lower regions, and replace the accursed thing where I found it. It required nerve to attempt this; but I was thoroughly wound up; and after allowing a reasonable time to elapse, to give my enemies a fair opportunity of falling asleep, I set out upon the adventure. The door creaked as I went out; the plate grated against my very soul as I descended the steps; but slowly, stealthily, I crept along the wall; and at length found myself on the level floor. There was but one door on that side of the hall, the door which led to the area-room—I recollect the fact distinctly—and it was with inexpressible relief I reached it in safety, and grasped the knob in my hand. The knob turned—but the door did not open: it was locked; it was my fate to be a thief; and after a

moment of new dismay, I turned again doggedly, reached the stair, and re-entered the apartment I had left.

It was like getting home. It was snug and private. I had a chair there waiting me. I thought to myself, that many a man would take a deal of trouble to break into such a house. I had only sneaked. I wondered how Jack Shepherd felt on such occasions. I had seen him at the Adelphi in the person of Mrs. Keeley, and a daring little dog he was. He would make nothing of getting down into the street from the window, spoons and all. I tried this: the shutters were not even closed, and the sash moving noiselessly, I had no difficulty in raising it. I stepped out into the balcony, and looked over. Nothing was to be seen but a black and yawning gulf beneath, guarded by the imaginary spikes of an invisible railing. Jack would have laughed at this difficulty; but then he had more experience in the craft than I, and was provided with all necessary appliances. As for me, I had stupidly forgotten even my coil of rope. The governor's house, I found, had either no balcony at all, or it was too far apart to be reached. Presently I heard a footstep on the *trottoir*, a little way off. It was approaching with slow and measured pace: the person was walking as calmly and gravely in the night as if it had been broad day. Suppose I hailed this philosophical stranger, and confided to him, in a friendly way, the fact that the baronet, without the slightest provocation, had locked me up in his house, with his silver spoons in my pocket? Perhaps he would advise me what to do in the predicament. Perhaps he would take the trouble of knocking at the door, or crying fire, and when the servants opened, I might rush out and so make my escape. But while I was looking wistfully down to see if I could not discern the walking figure, which was now under the windows, a sudden glare from the spot dazzled my sight. It

was the bull's-eye of a policeman; and with the instinct of a predatory character, I shrank back trembling, crept into the room, and shut the window.

By this time I was sensible that there was a little confusion in my thoughts, and by way of employing them on practical and useful objects, I determined to make a tour of the room. But first it was necessary to get rid, somehow or other, of my plunder—to plant the property, as we call it; and with that view I laid it carefully, piece by piece, in the corner of a sofa, and concealed it with the cover.

This was a great relief. I almost began to feel like the injured party—more like a captive than a robber; and I groped my way through the room, with a sort of vague idea that I might perhaps stumble upon some trap-door, or sliding-panel, which would lead into the open air, or, at worst, into a secret chamber, where I should be safe for any given number of years from my persecutors. But there was nothing of the kind in this stern, prosaic place: nothing but a few cabinets and tables, and couches, and arm-chairs, and common-chairs, and devotional-chairs; and footstools, and lamps, and statuettes, and glass-shades, and knick-knacks; and one elaborate girandole hung round with crystal prisms, which played such an interminable tune against each other when I chanced to move them, that I stumbled away as fast as I could, and subsided into a *fauteuil* so rich, so deep, that I felt myself swallowed up, as it were, in its billows of swan's down.

How long I had been in the house by this time, I cannot tell. It seemed to me, when I looked back, to form a considerable portion of a lifetime. Indeed, I did not very well remember the more distant events of the night; although every now and then the fact occurred to me with startling distinctness, that all I had gone through was only

preliminary to something still to happen; that the morning was to come, the family to be astir, and the housebreaker to be apprehended. My reflections were not continuous. It may be that I dozed between whiles. How else can I account for my feeling myself grasped by the throat, to the very brink of suffocation, by a hand without a body? How else can I account for sister Laura standing over me where I reclined, pointing to the stolen plate on the sofa, and lecturing me on my horrible propensities till she grew black in the face, and her voice rose to a wild unearthly scream which pierced through my brain?

When this fancy occurred, I started from my recumbent posture. A voice was actually in my ears, and a living form before my eyes: a lady stood contemplating me, with a half-scream on her lips, and the color fading from her cheek; and as I moved, she would have fallen to the ground, had I not sprung up and caught her in my arms. I laid her softly down in the *fauteuil*. It was the morning twilight. The silence was profound. The boundaries of the room were still dim and indistinct. Is it any wonder that I was in some considerable degree of perplexity as to whether I was not still in the land of dreams?

"Madam," said I, "if you are a vision, it is of no consequence; but if not, I want particularly to get out."

"Offer no injury," she replied, in a tremulous voice, "and no one will molest you. Take what you have come for, and begone."

"That is sooner said than done. The doors and windows below are locked and bolted; and beneath those of this room the area is deep, and the spikes sharp. I assure you, I have been in very considerable perplexity the whole of last night;" and drawing a chair, I sat down in front of her. Whether it was owing to this action, or to my complaining voice, or to the mere fact of her finding herself in

a quiet *tête-à-tête* with a housebreaker, I cannot tell; but the lady broke into a low hysterical laugh.

"How did you break in?" said she.

"I did not break: it is far from being my character, I assure you. But the area-window was open, and so I just thought I would come in."

"You were attracted by the plate! take it, for Heaven's sake, desperate man, and go away!"

"I did take some of it, but with no evil intention—only by way of amusement. Here it is;" and going over to the sofa, I threw off the cover, and showed her the plate.

"You have been generous," said she, her voice getting quaverous again; "for the whole must have been in your power. I will let you out so softly that no one will know. Put up in your pockets what you have risked so much to possess, and follow me."

"I will follow you with pleasure," said I, "were it all the world over;" for the increasing light showed me as lovely a creature as the morning sun ever shone upon; "but as for the plunder, you must excuse me there: I never stole anything before, and, please Heaven, I never will again!"

"Surely you are a most extraordinary person," said the young lady suddenly, for the light seemed to have made a revelation to her likewise: "you neither look nor talk like a robber."

"Nor am I. I am not even a robber—I am nothing: and have not property in the world to the value of these articles of plate."

"Then if you are not a robber, why are you here?—why creep in at the area-window, appropriate other people's spoons, and get locked up all night in their house?"

"For no other reason, than that I was in a hurry. I had come home from Barcelona, and was going in to my

guardian's next door, when your unfortunate area-window caught my eye, with the plate on the table inside. In an instant, I was over the rails and in through the window like a harlequin, with the intention of giving the family a pleasing surprise, and my old monitress, sister Laura, a great moral lesson on the impropriety of her leaving plate about in so careless a way."

"Then if you are Gerald, my dear Laura's cousin, so longingly expected—so beloved by them all—so"—Here the young lady blushed celestial rosy red, and cast down her eyes. What these two girls could have been saying to each other about me, I never found out; but there was a secret, I will go to death upon it.

She let me out so quietly, that neither her father nor the servants ever knew a syllable about the matter. I need not say how I was received next door. The governor swept down another sob with another guffaw; mamma bestowed upon me another blessing and another kiss; and Laura was so rejoiced, that she gave me another hearty cry, and forgot to give me another lecture. My next four years were spent to more purpose than the last. Being less in a hurry, I took time to build up a flourishing business in partnership with Laura's husband. As for the baronet's daughter—for we must get everybody into the concluding tableau—why there she is—that lady cutting bread and butter for the children, with as matronly an air as Werter's Charlotte: she is my wife; and we laugh to this day at the oddity of that First Interview which led to so happy a *dénouement*.

# The Two Isabels.

"Oh love, love, love, love!—love is like a dizziness,
It will not let a poor man go about his business."—Old Song.

The General put on his spectacles, and looked steadfastly at Isabel for at least two minutes. "Turn your head," he said, at last,—"there, to the left."

Isabel Montford, although an acknowledged beauty, was as amiable as she was admired; she had also a keen appreciation of character; and, though somewhat piqued, was amused by the oddity of her aunt's old lover. The General was a fine example of the well preserved person and manners of the past century; beauty always recognises beauty as a distinguished relative; and Isabel turned her head, to render it as attractive as it could be.

The General smiled, and, after gazing for another minute with evident pleasure, he said,—"Do me the favor to keep that attitude, and walk across the room."

Isabella did so with much dignity; she certainly was exceedingly handsome;—her step light, but firm; her figure, admirably poised; her head, well and gracefully placed; her features, finely formed; her eyes and smile, bright and

confiding. She would have been more captivating had her dress been less studied; her taste was evidently Parisian rather than classic. The gentleman muttered something, in which the words, "charming," and "to be regretted," only met her ear; then he spoke distinctly:

"You solicited my candor, young lady,—you challenged comparison between you and your compeers, and the passing belles whom I have seen. Now, be so kind as to walk out of the room, re-enter, and curtsey."

Had Isabel Montford been an uneducated young lady, she might have flounced out of the *salon*, in obedience to her displeasure, which was very decided; but as it was, she drew herself to her full height, and swept through the folding-doors. The General took a very large pinch of snuff. "That is so perfectly a copy of her poor aunt!" he murmured;—"just so would she pass onward, like a ruffled swan; she went after that exact fashion into the ante-room, when she refused me for the fourth time, thirty-five years ago."

The young Isabel re-entered, and curtseyed. The gentleman seated himself, leaned his clasped hands upon the head of his beautifully inlaid cane—which he carried rather for show than use—and said,—"Young lady, you look a divinity! Your *tournure* is perfection; but your curtsey is frightful! A dip, a bob, a bend, a shuffle, a slide, a canter—neither dignified, graceful, nor self-possessed! A curtsey is in grace what an *adagio* is in music;—only masters of the art can execute either the one or the other. Why, the beauty of the Duchess of Devonshire could not have saved her reputation as a graceful woman, if she had dared such a curtsey as that."

"I assure you, sir," remonstrated the offended Isabel, "that Madame Micheau——"

"What do I care for the woman?" exclaimed the General, indignantly. "Have I not memory?"

"Can you not teach me?" said Isabel, amused and interested by his earnestness.

"I teach you!—I! No; the curtseys which captivated thousands in my youth were more an inspiration than an art. The very queen of *ballet*, in the present day, cannot curtsey."

"Could my aunt?" inquired Isabel, a little saucily.

"Your aunt, Miss Montford, was grace itself. Ah! there are no such women nowadays!"

And, after the not very flattering observation, the General moved to the piano. Isabel's brows contracted, and her cheeks flushed; however, she glanced at the looking-glass, was comforted, and smiled. He raised the cover, placed the seat with the grave gallantry of an old courtier, and invited the young lady to play. She obeyed, to do her justice, with prompt politeness; she was not without hope that *there*, at least, the old gentleman would confess she was triumphant. Her white hands, gemmed with jewels, flew over the keys like winged seraphs; they bewildered the eye by the rapidity of their movements. The instrument thundered, but the thunder was so continuous that *there was no echo!* "The contrast will come by-and-by," thought the disciple of the old school;—"there must be some shadow to throw up the lights."

Thunder—crash—thunder—crash—drum—rattle—a confused, though eloquent, running backwards and forwards of sounds, the rings flashing like lightning! Another crash—louder—a great deal of crossing hands—violent strides from one end of the instrument to the other—prodigious displays of strength on the part of the fair performer—a terrific shake! "What desperate exertion!" thought the General; "and all to produce a soulless noise." Then followed a fearful banditti of octaves—another crash, louder and more prolonged than the rest; and she looked up with a trium-

phant smile,—a smile conveying the same idea as the pause of an opera-dancer after a most wonderful *pirouette*.

"Do you keep a tuner in the house, my dear young lady?" inquired the general.

If a look could have annihilated, he would have crumbled into ashes; but he only returned it with admiration, thinking "How astonishingly like her aunt, when she refused me the second time!"

"And that is fashionable music, Miss Montford? I have lived so long out of England, only hearing the music of Beethoven, and Mozart, and Mendelssohn, I was not aware that noise was substituted for power, and that execution had banished expression. Dear me!—why, the piano is vibrating at this moment! Poor thing! How long does a piano last you, Miss Montford?"

Isabel was losing her temper, when fortunately her aunt —still Miss Vere—came to the rescue. The lovers of thirty years past, would have met anywhere else as strangers. The once rounded and queen-like form of the elder Isabel was shorn of its grace and beauty; of all her attributes, of all her attractions, dignity only remained; and it was that high-bred, innate dignity which can never be acquired, and is never forgotten. She had not lost the eighth of an inch of her height, and her grey hair was braided in full folds over her fair but wrinkled brow. Isabel Montford looked so exactly what Isabel Vere had been, that General Gordon was sorely perplexed; Isabel Vere, if truth must be told, had taken extra pains with her dress; her niece had met the General the night before, and her likeness to her aunt had so recalled the past, that his promised visit to his old sweetheart (as he still called her) had fluttered and agitated her more than she thought it possible an interview with *any man* could do; she quarrelled with her beautiful grey hair, she cast off her black

velvet dress disdainfully, and put on a blue *Moire antique*. (She remembered how much the Captain—no, the General, once admired blue.) She was not yet a coquette; even grey hair at fifty-five does not cure coquetry where it has existed in all its strength; but, for the sake of her dear niece, she wished to look as well as possible. She wondered why she had so often refused "poor Gordon." She had been all her life of too delicate a mind to be a husband-hunter, too well satisfied with her position to calculate how it could be improved, and yet, she did not hesitate to confess to herself that now, in the commencement of old age, however verdant it might be, she would have been happier, of more consequence, of more value, as a married woman. She had too much good sense and good taste to belong to the class of discontented females, consisting of husbandless and childless women, who seek to establish laws at war with the laws of the Almighty; so, if her heart did beat a little stiffly, and sundry passages passed through her brain in connexion with her old adorer, and what the future might be,—she may be forgiven, and will be, by those not strong-minded women who understand enough of the waywardness of human nature to know that, if *young* heads and *old* hearts are sometimes found together, so are young hearts and old heads. The young laugh to scorn the idea of Cupid and a crutch, but Cupid has strange vagaries, and at any moment can barb his crutch with the point of an arrow.

"The old people," as Isabel Montford irreverently called them that evening, did not get on well together; they were in a great degree disappointed one with the other. They stood up to dance the "*minuet de la cour*," and Isabel Vere languished and swam as she had never done before; but the General only wondered how stiff she had grown, and hoped that he was not as ill used by time as Mistress

Isabel Vere had been. At first, Isabel Montford thought it "good fun" to see the antiquities bowing and curtseying, but she became interested in the lingering courtliness of the little scene, trembled lest her aunt should appear ridiculous, and then wondered how she could have refused such a man as General Gordon must have been.

Days and weeks flew fast; the General became a constant visitor in the square, and the heart of Isabel Vere had never beaten so loudly at twenty as it did at fifty-and-five; nothing, she thought, could be more natural than that the General should recall the days of his youth, and seek the friendship and companionship of her who had never married, while he—faithless man!—had been guilty of two wives during his "services in India." It was impossible to tell which of the ladies he treated with the most attention. Isabella Montford took an especial delight in tormenting him, and he was cynical enough towards her at times. Although he frankly abused her pianoforte-playing, yet he evidently preferred it to the music Miss Vere practised so indefatigably to please him, or to the songs she sang, in a voice which, from a high "soprano," had been crushed by time into what might be considered a very singular "mezzo." He somehow forgot how to find fault with Miss Montford's dancing, and more than once became her partner in a quadrille. It was evident, that while the General was growing young, Miss Vere remained—"as she was!" Isabel Montford amused herself at his expense, but he did not—quick-sighted and man-of-the-world though he was—perceive it. At first he was remarkably fond of recalling and dating events, and dwelling upon the grace, and beauty, and interest, and advantage, of whatever was past and gone—much to the occasional pain of Isabel Vere, who, gentle-hearted as she was, would have consigned *dates* to the bottomless pit; latterly, however, he talked a good

deal more of the present than of the past, and greatly to the annoyance of younger men, fell into the duties of escort to both ladies—accompanying them to places of public promenade and amusement.

On such occasions, Miss Isabel Vere looked either earnest or bashful—yes, positively bashful; and Miss Isabel Montford, brimful of as much mischief as a lady could delight in. At times, the General laid aside his cynical observations, together with his cane, which was not even replaced by an umbrella; to confess the truth, he had experienced several symptoms of *heart disease*, which, though they made him restless and uncomfortable, brought hopes and aspirations of life rather than fears of death.

One morning, Isabel Montford and the General were alone in the *salon* where this little scene first opened:—

"Our difference has never been settled yet," she exclaimed, gaily; "you have never proved to me the superiority of the Old school over the New."

"Simply because of your superiority to both," he replied.

"I do not perceive the point of the answer," said the young lady. "What has my superiority over *both* to do with the question?"

The General arose and shut the door. "Do you think you could listen to me seriously for five minutes?" he said.

"Listening is always serious work," she answered. He took her hand within his; she felt it was the hand of age; the bones and sinews pressed on her soft palm with an earnest pressure.

"Isabel Montford—could you love an old man?"

She raised her eyes to his, and wondered at the light which filled them:—

"Yes," she answered, "I could love an old man dearly; I could confide to him the dearest secret of my heart."

"And your heart, your heart itself? Such things have

been, sweet Isabel." His hand was *very* hard, but she did not withdraw hers.

"No, not *that*, because—because I have not my heart to give." She spoke rapidly, and with emotion. "I have it not to give, and I have so longed to tell you my secret! You have such influence with my aunt, you have been so affectionate, so like a father to me, that if you would only intercede with *her*, for *him* and me, I know she could not refuse. I have often—often thought of entreating this, and now, it was so kind of you to ask, if I could love an old man, giving me the opportunity of showing that I do, by confiding in you, and asking your intercession."

The room became misty to the General's eyes, and the rattle of a battle-field sounded in his ears, and beat upon his heart.

"And pray, Miss Montford," he said, after a pause, "who may *him* be?"

"Ah, *you* do not know him!—my aunt forbade the continuance of our acquaintance the day before I had the happiness to meet you. It was most fortunate I wooed you to call upon her, thinking—" (she looked up at his fine face, whose very wrinkles were aristocratic, and smiled her most bewitching smile) "thinking the presence of the only man she ever loved would soften her, and hoping that I should one day be privileged to address you as my friend, my uncle!" And she kissed his hand.—It really was hard to bear. "I have heard her say," persisted the young lady, "that when prompted by evil counsel she refused you, she loved you, and since your return, she only lives in your presence." The General wondered if this was true, and thought he would not give the young beauty a triumph. He was recovering his self-possession. "I remembered your admiration of *passing belles*, and felt how kindly you tolerated me, *for my aunt's sake;* and surely you will aid

me in a matter upon which my happiness and the happiness of that poor dear fellow depends!" She bent her beautiful eyes on the ground.

"And who is the poor dear fellow?" inquired the General, in a singularly husky voice.

"Henry Mandeville," half-whispered Isabel. "Oh, is it not a beautiful name? The initials on those lovely handkerchiefs you gave me will still do; I shall still be I. M."

"A son of old Admiral Mandeville's?"

"The *youngest* son," she sighed, "that is my aunt's objection; were he the *eldest*, she would have been too happy. Oh, sir, he is such a hero! lost a leg at Cabool, and received I don't know how many stabs from those horrid Affgauns."

"Lost a leg?" repeated the General, with an approving glance at his own; "why, he can never dance with you."

"No, but he can admire my dancing, and does not think my curtsey a dip, a shuffle, a bend, a bob, a slide, a canter! Ah! dear General, I was always perfection in his eyes."

"By the immortal Duke," thought the General, "the young divinity is laughing at me!"

"My aunt only objects to his want of money; now I have abundance for both; and your recommendation, dear sir, at the Horse Guards, would at once place him in some position of honor and of profit; and even if it were abroad, I could leave my dear aunt with the consciousness that her happiness is secured by you, dear guardian angel that you are! Ah, sir! at your time of life you can have no idea of our feelings."

"Oh yes, I have!" sighed the General.

"Bless you!" she exclaimed enthusiastically; "I thought you would recal the days of your youth and feel for us; and when you see my dear Henry——"

"With a cork leg——"

"Aye, or with two cork legs—you will, I know, be convinced that my happiness is as secure as your own."

"Women are riddles, one and all!" said the General, "and I should have known that before."

"Oh! do not say such cruel things and disappoint me, depending as I have been on your kindness and affection. Hark!" she continued, "I hear my aunt's footstep; now dear, *dear* General, reason coolly with her—my very existence depends on it. If you only knew him! Promise, do promise that you will use your influence, all-powerful as it is, to save my life."

She raised her beautiful eyes, swimming in unshed tears, to his; she called him her uncle, her dear noble-hearted friend; she rested her snowy hand lovingly—imploringly, on his shoulder, and even murmured a hope that, her aunt's consent once gained, it might not be impossible to have the two weddings *on the same day.*

The General may have dreaded the banter of sundry members of the "Senior United Service Club" who had already jested much at his devotion to the two Isabels; he *may* have felt a generous desire to make two young people happy, and his good sense doubtless suggested that sixty-five and twenty bear a strong affinity to January and May; he certainly did himself honor, by adopting the interests of a brave young officer as his own, and avoided the banter of "the club" by pledging the thrice-told vows to his "old love," the same bright morning that his "new love" gave her heart and hand to Henry Mandeville.

# Popping the Question.

"FAINT heart," says the adage, "never won fair ladye." I know not who it was that gave birth to this "wise saw"—whether it is to be found in Homer, as some say all things may (it is a long time since we read Homer)—or whether some gallant son of Mars introduced it to the world by way of forwarding the views of himself and comrades. But this I know, that whoever the person may be, he has much to answer for: much to answer for to the ladies for subjecting them to the affectations and impertinences of our sex—much to answer for to us, for encouraging the belief that such a behavior is pleasing to the fair.

Perhaps it may be urged that a misapprehension and misapplication of the adage have caused the grievance I complain of. It may be so: but it is not enough that a law is made with a view to encourage merit; it should be so framed as to defy a perversion to the purposes of evil. In the blessed days of chivalry, no doubt, the bravest knights were—as they deserved to be—the most successful pleaders in the bower of beauty. But let it be remembered that, in those days, the gallants were bold as lions in battle,

but in a lady's boudoir (if such an anachronism may be allowed) meek as so many lambs. Now, I much fear the high bearing of our gallants is chiefly displayed in the chambers of their mistresses, while craven hearts are found to tremble in the tent. Alas, for the days of chivalry! In a word—though I speak it with the most perfect good humor, and without a particle of jealousy—I consider the young men of the present day a saucy, empty, assuming, ill-bred set of fellows, and altogether unworthy the favors of the belles of the nineteenth century.

I am not a nineteenth-century man myself, and I thank the gods (particularly the god of love) for that consolation in the midst of all my sorrows. Forty years ago things were very different: the young folks of that age were men of another calibre, men who paid some regard to *decency*, and were not ashamed to wear the blush of modesty upon all proper occasions. I was a lover then; and I confess (though at the risk of getting laughed at for my pains), felt as much alarm at the idea of "popping the red-hot question," as facing a fifteen-pounder. An offer of marriage at that time of day was matter of deliberation for weeks, months—nay, frequently for years: not, as now, an affair of three interviews—a ball, a morning call, and an evening at the opera. No, no: Gretna Green was a *terra incognita* in those days; and except in plays and romances, no man ever dreamt of stealing an heiress *burglariously* (for I can find no softer term for it), or running away with a beauty, and asking her consent afterwards.

The manner of popping the question, certainly, must always vary considerably with the varying dispositions and habits of men. The young lawyer, for instance, would put it in a precise, parchment sort of way,—I, A. B., do hereby ask and solicit, &c.—while the poet, no doubt, would whip in a scrap of Ovid, and make it up into a sonnet or moon-

light impromptu. I remember the opinion of a young beau of Gray's Inn (macaronies we used to call them in those days), who, on its being suggested that the best way of putting the query was by writing, replied, "No, that would never do; for then the lady would have it to show against you."

But to my tale. About twenty years ago (I was not then so bald as I am now), I was spending the Midsummer with my old friend and schoolfellow, Tom Merton. Tom had married early in life, and had a daughter, Mary Rose, who, to her "father's wit and mother's beauty," added her uncle Absalom's good humor, and her aunt Deborah's notability. In her you had the realization of all that the poets have sung about fairy forms, dulcet voices, and witching eyes. She was just such a being as you may imagine to yourself in the heroine of some beautiful romance—Narcissa, in Roderick Random, for instance—or Sophia, in Tom Jones—or Fanny, in Joseph Andrews—not the modern, lackadaisical damsels of Colburn and Bentley. If she had met the eye of Marc Antony, Cleopatra might have exerted her blandishments in vain: if Paris had but seen Mary Rose Merton, Troy might have been standing to this day. Such was the presiding divinity of the house where I was visiting. My heart was susceptible, and I fell in love. No man, I thought, had ever loved as I did—a common fancy among lovers—and the intensity of my affection I believed would not fail to secure a return. One cannot explain the secret, but those who have felt the influence, will know how to judge of my feelings. I was as completely over head and ears as mortal could be: I loved with that entire devotion that makes filial piety and brotherly affection sneak to a corner of man's heart, and leave it to the undisputed sovereignty of feminine beauty.

The blindness incidental to my passion, and the young lady's uniform kindness, led me to believe that the possibility of her becoming my wife was by no means so remote as at first it had appeared to be; and having spent several sleepless nights in examining the subject on all sides, I determined to make her an offer of my hand, and to bear the result, pro or con, with all due philosophy. For more than a week I was disappointed in an opportunity of speaking alone with my adored, notwithstanding I had frequently left the dinner-table prematurely with that view, and several times excused myself from excursions which had been planned for my especial amusement.

At length the favorable moment seemed to be at hand. A charity sermon was to be preached by the bishop, for the benefit of a Sunday school, and as Mr. Merton was churchwarden, and destined to hold one of the plates, it became imperative on his family to be present on the occasion. I, of course, proffered my services, and it was arranged that we should set off early next morning, to secure good seats in the centre aisle. I could hardly close my eyes that night for thinking how I should "Pop the Question;" and when I did get a short slumber, was waked on a sudden by some one starting from behind a hedge, just as I was disclosing the soft secret. Sometimes, when I had fancied myself sitting by the lovely Mary in a bower of jasmine and roses, and had just concluded a beautiful rhapsody about loves and doves, myrtles and turtles, I raised my blushing head, and found myself *tête-à-tête* with her papa. At another moment, she would slip a beautiful pink, hot-pressed billet-doux into my hand, which, when I unfolded it, would turn out to be a challenge from some favored lover, desiring the satisfaction of meeting me at half-past six in the morning, and so forth, and concluding, as usual, with an indirect allusion to a horsewhip. Morning dreams, they say, always come

true. It is a gross falsehood; mine never came true. But I had a pleasant vision that morning, and recollecting the gossip's tale, I fondly hoped it would be verified. Methought I had ventured to "pop the question" to my Dulcinea, and was accepted. I jumped out of bed in a tremor. "Yes," I cried, "I *will* pop the question: ere this night-cap again envelope this unhappy head, the trial shall be made!" and I shaved, and brushed my hair over the bald place on my crown, and tied my cravat with unprecedented care; and made my appearance in the breakfast-parlor just as the servant-maid had begun to dust the chairs and tables.

Poor servant-maid! I exclaimed to myself—for I felt very Sterne-ish—was it ever thy lot to have the question popped into thy sophisticated ear? Mayhap, even now, as thou dustest the mahogany chairs, and rubbest down the legs of the rosewood tables, pangs of unrequited affection agitate thy tender bosom, or doubts of a lover's faith are preying upon thy maiden heart! I can fancy thee, fair domestic, standing in that neat dress thou wearest now—a gown of dark blue with a little white sprig, apron of criss-cross (housemaids were not above checked aprons in those days), and *black* cotton stockings—that identical *duster*, perhaps, waving in thy ruby hand—I can fancy thee, thus standing, sweet help, with thy lover at thy feet—he all hope and protestation, thou all fear and hesitation—his face glowing with affection, thine suffused with blushes—his eyes beaming with smiles, thine gushing with tears—love-tears, that fall, drop—drop—slowly at first, like the first drops of a thunder-storm, increasing in their flow, even as that storm increaseth, till finding it no longer possible to dissemble thy weeping, thou raisest the duster to thy cheeks, and smearest them with its pulverized impurities. But Love knows best how to bring about his desires: that little incident, simple—nay, silly as it may seem, has more quickly matured the project

than hours of sentiment could have done: for the begrimed countenance of the maiden sets both the lovers a-laughing—*she* is anxious to run away, to wash "the filthy witness" from her face—*he* will not suffer her to depart without a promise, a word of hope—she falters forth the soft syllables of consent—and the terrible task of "popping the question" is over.

Breakfast-time at length arrived. But I shall pass over the blunders I committed during its progress; how I salted Mary Rose's muffin instead of my own, poured the cream into the sugar basin, and took a bite at the tea-pot lid. "Pop the question" haunted me continually, and I feared to speak, even on the most ordinary topics, lest I should in some way betray myself. Pop—pop—pop! everything seemed to go off with a pop; and when at length Mr. Merton hinted to Mary and her mother that it was time for them to *pop* on their bonnets, I thought he laid a particular stress on the horrible monosyllable, and almost expected him to accuse me of some sinister design upon his daughter. It passed off, however, and we set out for the church. Mary Rose leaned upon my arm, and complained how dull I was. I, of course, protested against it, and tried to rally: vivacity, indeed, was one of my characteristics, and I was just beginning to make myself extremely agreeable, when a little urchin, in the thick gloom of a dark entry, let off a popgun close to my ear. The sound, simple as it may seem, made me start as if a ghost had stood before me, and when Mary observed that I was "very nervous this morning," I felt as if I could have throttled the lad; and inwardly cursed the inventor of popguns, and doomed him to the lowest pit of Acheron.

I strove against my fate, however, and made several observations. "Look," cried Mary Rose, as we gained the end of the street, "what a beautiful child!"

I turned my head to the window, when the first object that met my eyes was a square blue paper, edged with yellow, on which was written in too, too legible characters, "Pop." I believe I was surprised into an exclamation stronger than the occasion would seem to warrant, and the poor child came in for a share of my anathema. I didn't intend it, however, for I am very fond of children: but it served Mary Rose to scold me about till we came to the church door; and, if possible, bewildered me more than ever. We had now arrived in the middle aisle, when my fair companion whispered me, "My dear Mr. ——, won't you take off your hat?" This was only a prelude to still greater blunders. I posted myself at the head of the seat, sang part of the hundredth psalm while the organist was playing the symphony, sat down when I should have stood up, knelt when I ought to have been standing, and just at the end of the creed found myself pointed due west, the gaze and wonder of the whole congregation.

The sermon at length commenced; and the quietness that ensued, broken only by the perambulations of the beadle and sub-schoolmaster, and the collision ever and anon of their official wands with the heads of refractory students, guilty of the enormous crime of gaping or twirling their thumbs, gave me an opportunity of collecting my scattered thoughts. Just as the rest of the congregation were going to sleep, I began to awake from my mental lethargy; and by the time the worthy prelate had discussed three or four heads of his text, felt myself competent to make a speech in parliament. Just at this moment, too, a thought struck me, as beautiful as it was sudden—a plan by which I might make the desired tender of my person, and display an abundant share of wit into the bargain.

To this end I seized Mary Rose's prayer-book, and

turning over the pages till I came to matrimony, marked the passage, "Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?" with two emphatic dashes; and pointing significantly and confidently to myself, handed it to her with a bow. She took it!—she read it!!—she smiled!!! Was it a smile of assent? Oh, how my heart beat in my bosom at that instant—so loud, that I feared the people around us might hear its palpitations; and looked at them to see if they noticed me. She turned over a few leaves—she took my pencil, which I had purposely inclosed in the book—and she marked a passage. O ye gods and demigods! what were my sensations at that moment! not Jove himself, when he went swan-hopping to the lovely Leda—nor Pluto, when he perpetrated the abduction of the beautiful Proserpine, could have experienced a greater turmoil of passions than I at that moment. I *felt* the score—felt it as if it had been made across my very heart; and I grasped the book—and I squeezed the hand that presented it; and opening the page tremblingly, and holding the volume close to my eyes (for the type was small, and my sight not quite so good as it used to be), I read—O Mary Rose! O Mary Rose! that I should live to relate it!—"A woman may not marry her grandfather."

# Captain Withers' Engagement.

"SHORTLY after the glorious peace, as they call it, of 1815, I went upon half pay as a jolly lieutenant. I was very glad of the change, as everybody else was, at first. It was very pleasant to rise when one chose, to dine where he liked, and to run a comparatively trifling risk of having his brains knocked out before the evening. But rising at your own hour, dining at your own time, and even keeping your brains in safety, becomes very tiresome and fatiguing. In about a month I would have given the world to be back again to our hurried reveilles, uncertain dinners, and all the other glorious sufferings of 'grim-visaged war.' I tired of London in a very short time. They are such a set of chattering fellows those Cockneys; they worried my life out with their questions. Even in my coffee-room, I never could finish my modicum of port in peace. Some inquisitive fellow or other was sure to sit down at the opposite side of the table, and ask me all about Vaterloo and the Dook of Vellington. I never was much given to talking, especially over my wine, and offended sundry patriotic inquirers by

the shortness of my replies. But their persecution was too much for me at last. I was terrified to go anywhere; the moment the medal was seen, I was elevated into a hero, and had every opportunity given me of elevating myself into an orator at the same time. If I hid the medal, some coffee-room tormentor was sure to recognise me. I cursed the Duke, and the Peninsula, and Waterloo, as the disturbers of my peace, and resolved to hide myself in the country for a few months, till our fame should be in some measure forgotten. Luckily I saw an advertisement in the newspapers of a cottage to be let furnished, in the most beautiful part of Warwickshire. 'Swelling hills and verdant lawns, flashing waterfalls and umbrageous trees combined,' the advertisement said, 'to form a scene fitted for the contemplative recluse, or the enthusiastic lover of picturesque magnificence.' I soon settled the business with Mr. Robins, and started down for my new abode, having ordered a tolerable stock of genuine old port to precede me from the cellars of old Barnes. I arrived at last at the village of Hollywood, and inquired for the cottage I had taken. 'Minarets in the gothic style gave a degree of castellated splendor,' so Mr. Robins said, 'rarely to be met with in a cottage consisting of two small sitting rooms and three chambers. Situated in a small park-like inclosure, it contains every luxury within itself. Grecian couches, Arabian beds, and Turkey carpets, would add little to the convenience of this secluded paradise.' And, in fact, there is no saying what they might have done, for in this instance the experiment had not been tried. There were some good strong chairs and tables, a drugget on the floor, of a very comfortable appearance, and I must have looked like an innocent image of one of the babes in the wood, as I lay asleep in a little tent bed, about a foot and a half too short for me, with my complexion delicately whitened by the

reflection of the clean white dimity bed-curtains. However, my old cook, who was as deaf as a post, had never heard either of Waterloo or the Duke of Wellington, and I was perfectly happy and contented. I picked up a stout, natty sort of Suffolk punch, and a good strong dennet, kept them both at the village inn, smoked my cigar and drank my bottle, as we are told the patriarchs did long ago under their fig-trees. I actually began to grow fat, but in a few weeks my happiness was greatly interrupted. The clergyman of the parish called on me. He was a little old fellow about sixty, with a prodigious nose, surmounted by a pair of colored spectacles. When he came in, he sat down and took off his spectacles without saying a word, and as I was never very talkative, I waited very quietly till he should commence the conversation.

"'You have been at the wars, Captain?' he said.

I bowed.

"'Ah! bad things those wars, and this Waterloo, that the people talk so much of, was a bloody fight?'

"'Yes,' I said.

"'A bloody fight—a very bloody fight,' he went on; 'but what is that, sir, to the great battle of Armageddon, hundreds of thousands upon either side—earth shaking—sea trembling—pray, are you a student of the Apocalyptic commentaries?'

"'Commentaries!' I said, glad to catch at least a word I had heard before—'oh, I recollect Cæsar's Commentaries very well; some good fights there, sir.'

"'Yes, sir, but Armageddon is the greatest fight of all. Compared to it, this Waterloo is but a quarrel among some schoolboys—the Duke of Wellington but the strongest bully of the school—but when the devil himself is let loose and placed at the head of an army'——

"'I'll back the Duke against him for a rump and dozen,' said I, 'horns, tail, and all.'

"The little old man looked quite confounded at my reply—put on his spectacles, and in a very short time got up and bade me good morning. He has published a huge book, giving a full description of the battle; he is a little cracked, I suppose, in the upper story, but not a bad fellow for all that,—he drank port wine like a gentleman, and did not trouble his friends with much conversation. Several other people called on me, but we did not find each other very delightful, so after I had returned their visit, we nodded very politely when we met in the country roads, but never troubled our heads about talking. At last a gentleman called on me, of the name of Jenkins—he was a fellow quite after my own heart—had the best cellar in the county, said very little about it, but did his work after dinner like a man. Jenkins and I were sworn friends in a very short time. He was about fifty years of age, round, short, and ruddy. He had a capital house about half a mile from the village, and his elder sister, a widow, took care of his domestic concerns, as his daughter, a very pretty little girl of sixteen or seventeen, was thought too young to be installed as mistress of the family. Well, it was quite delightful, after driving through the beautiful scenery of that neighborhood, or hearing my reverend friend's account of some new vision, or his interpretation of some old one, to walk quietly over to 'the farm,' as Jenkins's villa was called, and have a cozy dinner and a quiet bottle or two of port. The whole family were always so happy to see me—Mrs. Meddleton, the widow, and little Julia, the daughter, seemed to contend which should be most hospitable. Sometimes they came down in the same way, and visited me at my little box in the village. On these occasions Mrs. Meddleton always did me the honor to preside at my table, and little Julia, with whom, as I had nothing else to do, I was very much inclined to fall in love, seemed to make

herself quite at home. In the meantime, old Jenkins and I sat opposite to each other, and pushed the bottle between us, very often without saying more than a word or two by the hour. The ladies were both what is called romantic, and used to talk a great deal about moonlight and nightingales. I thought it a capital joke to hear the old lady discoursing so poetically, and Julia seemed to enjoy the fun of it as much as I. When they left my cottage, I generally showed them through the fields, and often accompanied them the whole way home. Well, this sort of thing went on delightfully for, I should think, two years. Julia was now as charming a creature as I had ever taken the trouble to suppose women could be made. She was beautiful and merry; and I must say, I began to think I was rather a favorite with her. To be sure I never paid her any compliments, or put myself greatly out of my way to show my affection; but, by Jove, about the end of the second bottle strange feelings used to find their way into my heart, and I thought so much of her lovely features, that often through the haze of my cigar I have fancied I saw her smiling and looking very gracious, when perhaps it was only her father whiffing away as fast as a volcano. In the meantime, the old lady continued to be as kind as ever. She kept on quoting nonsense out of novels or romances, and was very well pleased with the 'yes' or 'no,' as the case might be, with which I replied to her rhapsodies.

"About this time a former pupil of our clergyman, Frank Walton, came down from Oxford to visit his old preceptor. The old man was half mad with pride and vanity, as Frank had taken some classes, or medals, or whatever they call their honors at the University, and invited us all to a dinner in celebration of the event. We went; upon my honor he was a very good fellow that Frank Walton, for a young one, and a chap who had done

nothing but turn over old musty parchment, instead of handling a sword. We managed to make old Armageddon as happy, and nearly as noisy, as if he had been present at the battle; and saw the Jenkins's safe across the fields with the steadiness of a couple of field-marshals. He came home with me to my cottage, and we had a very agreeable chat over a glass of brandy and water and a cigar—that is to say, he had most of the chat to himself, and a devil of a fellow to talk he was. He spoke of the Jenkins's. They had been old friends of his when he lived at the Rectory, and he really spoke so warmly and kindly of them all, that I could not resist hinting to him, in rather an obscure way, that I had some hopes of becoming one of Mr. Jenkins's family. Jenkins, I said, has been quite a brother to me already, so that we scarcely require any relationship to make us more intimate and friendly. The young collegian shook me by the hand, and congratulated me on my prospect. 'He did not believe,' he said, 'there was a more amiable creature in the world than the object of my choice.' We had some more cigars with accompaniments, on the strength of our new acquaintance, and parted the best friends in the world. Next evening as I sauntered up to the farm, I saw little Julia and Frank Walton straying slowly up the avenue before me. I got on the grass at the side, so as to make no noise, and got quite close upon them before they perceived my approach. In answer to something Walton said, I heard the young lady reply, in what I took to be rather an agitated tone—'I have seen his attentions for some time; and my aunt, I fancy, sees them too.' The devil she does, thought I.

"'Do you think your father would approve of it?' said Walton.

"'I don't see how he could make any objection. Mr. Withers seems already a great favorite with him. I myself

should be quite pleased, and my aunt, I am sure, will be delighted.'

"'Sweet angel!' I said to myself, 'she will be quite pleased.' I was just rushing up to thank her for the delightful discovery I had made, when Walton saw me, snatched my hand, and shook it very warmly. Julia, in the meantime, being very much startled by my unexpected appearance, made the best of her way to the house. 'I have done the business for you,' exclaimed Walton, with the most friendly warmth. 'Father, aunt, and daughter will all be delighted with whatever proposal you choose to make. As a very old friend of the family, I mentioned the subject to Miss Julia just as you came up, and I assure you her heart is entirely on your side.' I never was so happy or proud in my life. I thanked the jolly young Oxonian as kindly as I could, and asked him to consult with me that evening, over some brandy and water and cigars. When we arrived at Mr. Jenkins's, the whole party were kinder to me than ever. Walton, by way of preventing any awkwardness which Julia might feel under such interesting circumstances, took the care of entertaining her entirely upon himself. He whispered with her on the sofa; and once or twice, when I heard my name mentioned, I looked at her, and found such a beautiful and merry sort of smile upon her countenance, that I became more and more convinced that the young creature, by some means or other, had fallen desperately in love with me. Old Jenkins filled his glass, and drank my health with a very peculiar meaning. The old lady sat simpering beside me on the sofa, thinking it a capital thing, no doubt, to have something to say in so interesting a matter as a marriage. She sighed deeply every now and then; and as I supposed the business put her in mind of her own courtship, I did not like to take any notice of her proceedings. I merely told her to cheer

up and look happy, for I had something to say to her brother, which she would be, perhaps, not very sorry to hear. 'Sweet creature! so kind, so compassionate!' she said, looking at me with such a cursedly comical leer upon her face—that I could scarcely keep from laughing—and then hiding her eyes in her handkerchief!

"'Oh!' said old Jenkins, 'I guess something of the business, Withers. I give my hearty consent; but you had better settle the whole matter with my sister. The ladies know better about these things than we do.'

"Saying this, he finished his glass in a twinkling, and telling us he was going after Walton and Julia, who had gone down by the summer-house, he disappeared, leaving me alone with Mrs. Meddleton.

"I filled up my glass, and sat silent for some time, not knowing very well how to open the business to such a silly, romantic sort of old lady. But in a little, she took up the subject herself.

"'Have you been long unattached, Captain Withers?' she said, in a very sentimental voice.

"'About four years and a half,' I replied, 'ever since a very few months after the peace.'

"'But previous to that time,' the old fool continued—'previous to that time, I think I could tell from your face and manners, you have been more than once engaged.'

"Here, thought I, this silly creature is going to bother my life out about Waterloo and the Duke of Wellington. 'Yes, madam,' I replied, 'I have had my share in nine serious engagements, besides ten or twelve trifling little affairs not worth speaking of.'

"'Then, I perceive, you have been a man of very diffusive gallantry,' she said with a simper.

"Diffusive gallantry! thought I. There's a phrase! 'Why, yes, Mrs. Meddleton, we all of us did our best to

follow the Duke's example, and he is a devil of a fellow to come up to the scratch.'

"'Ah! Captain Withers,' she cried, 'you have a soul far, far above scratching! happiness, contentment, obedience, will far better become your quiet home, than the scratching, striving, and fighting you confess you were apt to meet with in your miscellaneous engagements.'

"'Yes,' said I, very drily, wishing to stop her nonsense; but all my attempts were vain.

"'You have a nice cottage in the village, Captain Withers; elegant, sumptuous, refined—fit for the abode of a retired warrior.'

"'I suspect, madam, you have been studying the advertisement—but it said something about the retirement of a poet—nothing that I recollect of about a warrior.'

"'A poet!—so, my heart's fondest longings at length are realized. You are a poet, Captain Withers; I have suspected it a long time. What a cheering employment for your lonely hours! The lines to a Robin Redbreast in the Warwick Mercury, are they yours? sweet, beautiful, delightful.'

"'No; I never wrote a line of any such cursed nonsense in my life.'

"'Ah! in a higher strain—an ode, perhaps, or an epic—grand, overwhelming, sublime.'

"I took two or three gulps of the port, and did not answer a word; at last I said, 'Mr. Jenkins, madam, left me here to consult you on a very tender subject. Your brother, as he told us, gives his consent: your niece has no objection—and I only wait your approval to consider myself the happiest of men.'

"She held down her head and muttered, 'charming, eloquent, and touching!' and then looking me in the face, said, 'Is it then possible that you can imagine for a moment

that any selfish scrupulosity of mine should hinder an event which will give so much delight to every member of my family? No! away foolish forms and useless dull delays, I here devote myself to your service!'

"'You are very obliging, Mrs. Meddleton; would you do me the favor to name as early a day as, after consulting your niece, you conveniently can?'

"'Niece!' she exclaimed—'I consult no niece, nor brother, nor any one but myself. Whatever day is most agreeable to you, you will find no impediment cast in the way by any one in this family.'

"'You are very kind. I will let you know in a few days, as soon as I shall have completed my preparations. In the meantime I will just finish this bottle, and join the party on the lawn.'

"'Do; do, my captain!' exclaimed the lady, with the tears actually standing in her eyes.

"'I am sorry, Mrs. Meddleton, I am not a captain as you call me. A plain lieutenant's wife is all the rank I can offer.'

"'Happier in that capacity than as a general's lady—polite, courteous, enchanting.'

"'Well, madam, I may consider everything satisfactorily settled?'

"'Yes, all, my Withers!'

"'D—n your Withers,' I muttered, and bolted out of the room.

"I and young Walton stayed to sup with the family that night. Love, I am sure, is a very healthful occupation, for I never eat with so ravenous an appetite in my life. Ham, turkey, tongue, disappeared in no time, and as for drinking, curse me if I thought old Jenkins and I should ever have done swigging vast tumblers to each other's health. In fact, the old gentleman got as drunk as a lord.

I can't say I myself was particularly sober, and the young Oxonian, though I perceived he shyed the bottle every time it came round, sang, and laughed, and reeled about as if he had been mad. I could not help thinking there was some little sham in it, but I thought if he was such an ass as to affect being merry, when he might be so in reality, the loss was his, not mine. Not a word was said on the subject of my offer. The ladies both seemed a little confused at old Jenkins's inuendos, and retired early to bed. We went on drinking to a late hour, and when I offered to go away, my old friend would not hear of the proposal. 'Body-o'-me, man—we don't turn near relations out at this hour o' the night. You shall sleep here, you shall; Frank can toddle home to the parsonage in a jiffy: but for you, my boy, you shan't stir a step! We'll have another tumbler, and this cigar—so, good-night, Frank, my boy.'

"Walton got up to leave us. As I went with him to the door, and shook hands at parting, he whispered that he had intended to ask a favor of me in return for the use he had been of in my behalf. 'What is it?' I said.

"'Oh, nothing—nothing—only if there's an alarm of housebreakers to-night, don't disturb yourself, 'tis only a frolic of mine.'

"'What! Sally is it?—wild rogue—I'll sleep as sound as Orpheus—off with you.'

"And away he went. In a short time after his departure, old Jenkins really became so foolish and unintelligible, that I was very glad when his old servant, William, came in to huddle him off to bed. I took my candle, and as I knew the house pretty well, no one thought of showing me the way. I confess my exertions had scarcely been less than those of my future father-in-law, but luckily I had a stronger head. As I stalked with all the steadiness I could muster along the passage, I came suddenly—at a side

window which looked out upon the lawn,—upon the beautiful Julia herself. 'Heavens!' I cried, 'how lucky I am!' 'Hush,' she said, 'you'll alarm the house.' 'And what are you doing here, my pretty one,—dressed, too, as if for a promenade,—you ought to have been sound asleep an hour ago.' 'I was tempted by this beautiful moon,—(the devil a moon I could see),—'but now I am hurrying off as fast as I can.' I seized her hand as she attempted to pass me, and devoured it with kisses as gallantly as the hero of a novel. She pulled it suddenly and rather angrily away from me. 'For shame, Captain Withers,' she said, holding up her finger upbraidingly, 'what would my aunt say?' 'Your aunt, my dear Julia, may say whatever her old silly tongue thinks proper, but as for you and me, my darling ———' The young lady had disappeared, and I made such an unconscionable lurch as I enacted the lover, that I nearly put out my candle. I went to bed, and in about a couple of minutes was as fast as Gibraltar.

"I can't tell how long I had been asleep, when I thought I heard a voice several times calling on me to get up. I recollected my promise to young Walton, and slipping up as gently as possible, and groping my way in the pitch darkness to the door, I turned the key without the slightest noise, and got quietly into the warm crib again. I had not been well asleep the second time, when such a devil of a row was kicked up in the passage, that it was impossible even to pretend not to be disturbed. I heard old Jenkins, scarcely recovered from the effects of his potations, holloaing at the top of his voice for Julia—then a prodigious knocking at another door in the passage, and exclamations for 'Sister!—Sister Meddleton!' In a moment my door was attacked as if by a battering-ram. 'Withers! Captain Withers! for God's sake answer if you are within! —Julia and her aunt have disappeared—open the door.'

"Thus adjured, I could not refuse; I opened the door, and in walked old Jenkins, and William close behind him, while two or three of the maid-servants peeped in with the utmost anxiety from the passage. 'Hilloa, what's the matter?' I said. 'Is the house robbed?'—'Robbed!' replied old Jenkins, 'I fear it is. Julia is nowhere to be found. Her clothes have all disappeared. I strongly suspect she has eloped.' 'Impossible!' I cried, greatly perplexed, 'after what happened yesterday, it would be madness to suspect it.' 'My sister, too, is nowhere to be found.' 'Ha, ha,' I cried, 'that's too much of a joke. Do you think anybody has run off with *her*, too?'

"'There's no saying.'

"'I'll warrant ye against that. Who the deuce would take the trouble to carry off such a silly chattering piece of rubbish?'

"'She's certainly very silly,' replied my friend; 'but then she is so confoundedly romantic;—and you yourself, Captain Withers, made proposals for her not many hours ago.'

"'For *her?*—for Mrs. Meddleton? by the powers! you are facetious this morning. What! *I* make proposals for *her?*—such a queer, old, ridiculous vixen as that?'

"'And why not, sir?' cried the lady herself, coming out from behind the curtain at the foot of my bed!—'old, indeed?—ridiculous?—silly?'

"Old Jenkins nearly fainted at this unexpected apparition,—'Captain Withers,' he said, 'this is too much. You shall answer for this, sir. What business has that lady in your bed-room?'

"'Upon my soul, I should like very much if you would ask her. I'll take my oath it was not by *my* invitation,' said I.

"'I'll tell you all about that,' said the lady, casting

disdainful looks all the time at me; 'on the first alarm of Julia's elopement, I rushed into the passage, not knowing what I did; and anxious to get Captain Withers' assistance, I opened his door and called him; he was sound asleep, I went up to him and called louder and louder, but he seemed to take no notice. All of a sudden, he jumped out of bed, and ran and bolted the door. What was I to do? I hid myself behind the curtain till you came in,—and now to hear what the wretch says of me behind my back—false, inconstant, cruel, O! O! O!'

"'I don't believe a word of all this story of yours,' said old Jenkins.—'Captain Withers, you are a rascal, sir. You have abused my hospitality, and dishonored my family; you shall pay for it, sir; you are a villain'——

"'Very well, old gentleman,' I said, having now finished dressing, 'go on as much as you like; I shall have the honor, the moment I can procure a friend, of shooting you as dead as a herring. I certainly took a fancy to your daughter, and asked your consent to let me marry her. You said you were very happy—this old lady said the same;—but till we have had a meeting, of course all negotiations are at an end.'

"'We shall have no meeting, sir, rest assured of that, unless in presence of a jury,' he replied. I put on my hat, and walked quietly out of the house, leaving the old lady with her face hidden in her handkerchief, crying out, 'Oh, my character, my poor character!—lost—ruined—miserable—undone!'

"Well, gentlemen,"—continued Withers, "I suppose you all guess what was the real truth of the matter. Walton and Julia had gone off together, getting me into a deuce of a scrape by their folly. Old Jenkins forgave them with all his heart, as he was anxious for their evidence against me. They raised an action of damages for breach

of promise of marriage. The widow was examined by the jury at great length. She swore to them that I had asked her to marry—not in precise words, for I was the most silent gentleman she had ever met with—but that I had told her, I sighed for a friend's company—meaning her by the word 'friend.' I was only a lieutenant then, you'll remember, and had some thoughts of giving Jack Morrell the difference for a captaincy in the line.

"Old Armageddon swore that I had certainly given him to understand that I was soon to be a brother of Mr. Jenkins's.

"Julia herself declared that she had looked upon her aunt as the cause of my frequent visits to their cottage, and related conversations, which she had understood in quite a different way from what I had meant them.

"Walton swore that I informed him positively I was going to marry Mrs. Meddleton.

"But when old Jenkins told them, in addition to all that the others had said, the story of her being found, under very suspicious circumstances, in my bed-room, the whole jury rose up in an agony of indignation, returned a verdict for the whole amount of damages, and expressed great sorrow they had not been laid at a higher sum. What could twelve low fellows, shut up in a box, know of promises of marriage, tender feelings, harrowing distress, and all the nonsense a chattering fellow in a wig talked to them about? But still they nabbed me, you'll perceive. I had to pay two thousand pounds, besides a great deal more for expenses. I gave up my castellated cottage, used great exertions to get on full pay, and have never from that day to this said a civil word to a woman, especially to a widow."

# The Twin Sisters.

Among those who attended the first of the king's levees, during the London season of 18—, was an unmarried gentleman of large fortune, named Streatfield. While his carriage was proceeding slowly down St. James's street, he naturally sought such amusement and occupation as he could find in looking on the brilliant scene around him. The day was unusually fine, crowds of spectators thronged the street and the balconies of the houses on either side of it, all gazing at the different equipages with as eager a curiosity and interest, as if fine vehicles and fine people inside them were the rarest objects of contemplation in the whole metropolis. Proceeding at a slower and slower pace, Mr. Streatfield's carriage had just arrived at the middle of the street, when a longer stoppage than usual occurred. He looked carelessly up at the nearest balcony; and there, among some eight or ten ladies, all strangers to him, he saw one face that riveted his attention immediately.

He had never beheld anything so beautiful, anything which struck him with such strange, mingled, and sudden

sensations, as this face. He gazed and gazed on it, hardly knowing where he was, or what was doing, until the line of vehicles began to move on. Then, after first ascertaining the number of the house—he flung himself back in the carriage, and tried to examine his own feelings, to reason himself into self-possession; but it was all in vain. He was seized with that amiable form of social monomania, called "love at first sight."

He entered the palace, greeted his friends, and performed all the necessary court ceremonies, feeling the whole time like a man in a trance. He spoke mechanically, and moved mechanically; the lovely face in the balcony occupied his thoughts, to the exclusion of everything else. On his return home, he had engagements for the afternoon and the evening—he forgot and broke them all; and walked back to St. James's street as soon as he had changed his dress.

The balcony was empty; the sight-seers, who had filled it but a few hours before, had departed—but obstacles of all sorts now tended only to stimulate Mr. Streatfield; he was determined to ascertain the parentage of the young lady, determined to look on the lovely face again—the thermometer of his heart had risen already to fever heat! Without loss of time, the shopkeeper to whom the house belonged, was bribed to loquacity by a purchase. All he could tell, in answer to inquiries, was that he had let lodgings to an elderly gentleman and his wife, from the country, who had asked some friends into their balcony to see the carriages go to the levee. Nothing daunted, Mr. Streatfield questioned and questioned again. What was the old gentleman's name?—Dimsdale—could he see Mr. Dimsdale's servant? The obsequious shopkeeper had no doubt that he could; Mr. Dimsdale's servant should be sent for immediately.

In a few minutes the servant, the all-important link in the chain of love's evidence, made his appearance. He was a pompous, portly man, who listened with solemn attention, with stern judicial calmness, to Mr. Streatfield's rapid and somewhat confused inquiries, which were accompanied by a minute description of the young lady, and by several explanatory statements, all very fictitious, and all very plausible. Stupid as the servant was, and suspicious as all stupid people are, he had nevertheless sense enough to perceive that he was addressed by a gentleman, and gratitude enough to feel considerably mollified by the handsome douceur which was quietly slipped into his hand. After much pondering and doubting, he at last arrived at the conclusion that the object of Mr. Streatfield's inquiries was a Miss Langley, who had joined the party in the balcony that morning, with her sister; and who was the daughter of Mr. Langley, of Langley Hall, in ——shire. The family was now staying in London, at —— street. More information than this, the servant stated that he could not afford—he was certain that he had made no mistake, for the Misses Langley were the only very young ladies in the house that morning; however, if Mr. Streatfield wished to speak to his master, he was ready to carry any message with which he might be charged.

But Mr. Streatfield had already heard enough for his purposes, and departed at once for his club, determined to discover some means of being introduced, in due form, to Miss Langley, before he slept that night, though he should travel round the whole circle of his acquaintance, high and low, rich and poor, in making the attempt. Arrived at the club, he began to inquire resolutely, in all directions, for a friend who knew Mr. Langley, of Langley Hall. He disturbed gastronomic gentlemen at their dinner; he interrupted agricultural gentlemen, who were moaning over the

prospects of the harvest; he startled literary gentlemen, who were deep in the critical mysteries of the last Review; he invaded billiard room, dressing room, smoking room; he was more like a frantic ministerial whipper-in, hunting up stray members for a division, than an ordinary man; and the oftener he was defeated in his object, the more determined he was to succeed. At last, just as he was standing in the hall of the club-house, thinking where he should go next, a friend entered, who at once relieved him of all his difficulties—a precious, an inestimable man, who was on intimate terms with Mr. Langley, and had been lately staying at Langley Hall. To this friend all the lover's cares and anxieties were at once confided; and a fitter depository for such secrets of the heart could hardly have been found. He made no jokes, for he was not a bachelor; he abstained from shaking his head and recommending prudence, for he was not a seasoned husband or an experienced widower; what he really did, was to enter heart and soul into his friend's projects, for he was precisely in that position, the only position, in which the male sex generally take a proper interest in match-making; he was a newly married man.

Two days after, Mr. Streatfield was the happiest of mortals; he was introduced to the lady of his love, to Miss Jane Langley. He really enjoyed the priceless privilege of looking once more on the face in the balcony, and looking on it almost as often as he wished. It was perfect Elysium. Mr. and Mrs. Langley saw little or no company. Miss Jane was always accessible, never monopolized; the light of her beauty shone day after day for her adorer alone; and his love blossomed in it, as fast as flowers in a hothouse. Passing by all the minor details of the wooing to arrive the sooner at the grand fact of the winning, let us simply relate that Mr. Streatfield's object in seeking

an introduction to Mr. Langley, was soon explained, and was indeed visible enough long before the explanation. He was a handsome man, an accomplished man, and a rich man. His two first qualifications conquered the daughter, and his third the father. In six weeks Mr. Streatfield was the accepted lover of Miss Jane Langley. The wedding-day was fixed; it was arranged that the marriage should take place at Langley Hall, whither the family proceeded, leaving the unwilling lover in London, a prey to all the inexorable business formalities of the occasion. For ten days did the ruthless lawyers, those dead-weights on the back of Hymen, keep their victim in the metropolis, occupied over settlements that never seemed likely to be settled. But even the long march of the law has its ends, like other mortal things; at the expiration of ten days all was completed, and Mr. Streatfield found himself at liberty to start for Langley Hall.

A large party was assembled at the house to grace the approaching nuptials. There were to be tableaux, charades, boating trips, riding excursions, amusements of all sorts, the whole to conclude (in the play-bill phrase) with the grand climax of the wedding. Mr. Streatfield arrived late, dinner was ready, he had barely time to dress and then bustle into the drawing-room just as the guests were leaving it, to offer his arm to Miss Jane, all greetings with friends and introductions to strangers being postponed till the party met round the dining table.

Grace had been said, the covers were taken off, the loud, cheerful hum of conversation was just beginning, when Mr. Streatfield's eyes met the eyes of a young lady who was seated opposite, at the table. The guests near him, observing at the same moment that he continued standing after every one else had been placed, glanced at him inquiringly. To their astonishment and alarm, they

observed that his face had suddenly become deadly pale—his rigid features looked struck by paralysis. Several of his friends spoke to him, but for the first few moments he returned no answer. Then, still fixing his eyes upon the young lady opposite, he abruptly exclaimed in a voice, the altered tones of which startled every one who heard him, "That is the face I saw in the balcony; that woman is the only woman I can ever marry!" The next instant, without a word more, either of explanation or apology, he hurried from the room.

One or two of the guests mechanically started up, as if to follow him; the rest remained at the table, looking on each other in speechless surprise. But before any one could either act or speak, almost at the moment when the door closed on Mr. Streatfield, the attention of all was painfully directed to Jane Langley. She had fainted. Her mother and sisters removed her from the room immediately, aided by the servants. As they disappeared, a dead silence again sank down over the company; they all looked around, with one accord, to the master of the house.

Mr. Langley's face and manner sufficiently revealed the suffering and suspense that he was secretly enduring. But he was a man of the world, and neither by word nor action did he betray what was passing within him. He resumed his place at the table, and begged his guests to do the same. He affected to make light of what had happened, entreated every one to forget it, or, if they remembered it at all, to remember it only as a mere accident, which would no doubt be satisfactorily explained. Perhaps it was only a jest on Mr. Streatfield's part—rather too serious a one, he must own. At any rate, whatever was the cause of the interruption to the dinner, which had just happened, it was not important enough to require everybody to fast around the table of the feast. He asked it as a favor to himself that

no further notice might be taken of what had occurred. While Mr. Langley was speaking thus, he hastily wrote a few lines on a piece of paper, and gave it to one of the servants. The note was directed to Mr. Streatfield; the lines contained only these words:—"Two hours hence I shall expect to see you alone in the library."

The dinner proceeded; the places occupied by the female members of the Langley family, and by the young lady who had attracted Mr. Streatfield's notice in so extraordinary a manner, being left vacant. Every one endeavored to follow Mr. Langley's advice, and go through the business of the dinner as though nothing had occurred; but the attempt failed miserably. Long blank pauses occurred in the conversation; general topics were started, but never pursued. It was more like an assembly of strangers than a meeting of friends; people neither eat nor drank, as they were accustomed to eat and drink; they talked in altered voices, and sat with unusual stillness, even in the same positions. Relatives, friends, and acquaintances, all alike perceived that some great domestic catastrophe had happened; all foreboded that some serious, if not fatal, explanation of Mr. Streatfield's conduct would ensue; and it was vain and hopeless—a very mockery of self-possession, to attempt to shake off the sinister and chilling influences that recent events had left behind them, and resume at will the thoughtlessness and hilarity of ordinary life. Still, however, Mr. Langley persisted in doing the honors of the table, in proceeding doggedly through all the festive ceremonies of the hour, until the ladies rose and retired. Then, after looking at his watch, he beckoned to one of his sons to take his place, and quietly left the room. He only stopped once as he crossed the hall to ask news of his daughter from one of his servants. The reply was, that she had had a hysterical fit, that the medical attendant of the family

had been sent for, and that since his arrival she had become more composed. When the man had spoken, Mr. Langley made no remark, but proceeded at once to the library. He locked the door behind him, as soon as he had entered the room. Mr. Streatfield was already waiting there; he was seated at the table, endeavoring to maintain an appearance of composure, by mechanically turning over the leaves of the books before him. Mr. Langley drew a chair near him, and in low, but very firm tones, began the conversation thus:—

"I have given you two hours, sir, to collect yourself, to consider your position fully; I presume, therefore, that you are now prepared to favor me with an explanation of your conduct at my table to-day."

"What explanation can I make! what can I say or think of this most terrible of fatalities!" exclaimed Mr. Streatfield, speaking faintly and confusedly, and still not looking up. "There has been an unexampled error committed, a fatal mistake, which I could never have anticipated, and over which I had no control."

"Enough, sir, of the language of romance," interrupted Mr. Langley, coldly; "I am neither of an age nor a disposition to appreciate it. I come here to ask plain questions honestly, and I insist, as my right, on receiving answers in the same spirit. You, Mr. Streatfield, sought an introduction to me, you professed yourself attached to my daughter Jane, your proposals were (I fear unhappily for us) accepted, your wedding-day was fixed, and now after all this, when you happen to observe my daughter's twin-sister sitting opposite to you——"

"Her twin-sister!" exclaimed Mr. Streatfield; and his trembling hand crumpled the leaves of the book, which he still held while he spoke. "Why is it, intimate as I have been with your family, that I now know for the first time that Miss Jane Langley has a twin sister?"

"Do you descend, sir, to subterfuge, when I ask you for an explanation?" returned Mr. Langley, angrily; "you must have heard over and over again, that my children, Jane and Clara, were twins."

"On my word and honor I declare that——"

"Spare me all appeals to your word and honor, sir; I am beginning to doubt both."

"I will not make the unhappy situation in which we are all placed, still worse, by answering your last words as I might at other times feel inclined to answer them," said Mr. Streatfield, assuming a calmer demeanor than he had hitherto displayed. "I tell you the truth, when I tell you that before to-day I never knew that any of your children were twins. Your daughter, Jane, has frequently spoken to me of her absent sister, Clara, but never spoke of her as her twin-sister. Until to-day, I have had no opportunity of discovering the truth, for until to-day I have never met Miss Clara Langley since I saw her in the balcony of the house in St. James's street. The only one of your children who was never present during my intercourse with your family in London, was your daughter Clara, the daughter whom I now know for the first time as the young lady who really arrested my attention on my way to the levee, whose affections it was really my object to win in seeking an introduction to you. To me, the resemblance between the twin-sisters has been a fatal resemblance; the long absence of one, a fatal absence."

There was a momentary pause, as Mr. Streatfield sadly and calmly pronounced the last words. Mr. Langley appeared to be absorbed in thought. At length he proceeded, speaking to himself:—"It is strange—I remember that Clara left London on the day of the levee to set out on a visit to her aunt, and only returned here two days since, to be present at her sister's marriage. Well, sir," he continued,

addressing Mr. Streatfield, "granting what you say, granting that we all mentioned my absent daughter to you, as we are accustomed to mention her among ourselves, simply as 'Clara,' you have still not excused your conduct in my eyes. Remarkable as the resemblance is between the sisters—more remarkable even, I am willing to admit, than the resemblance usually is between twins—there is yet a difference, and which, slight and indescribable though it may be, is nevertheless discernible to all their relations and to all their friends. How is it that you, who represent yourself as so vividly impressed by your first sight of my daughter Clara, did not discover the error when you were introduced to her sister Jane, as the lady who had so much attracted you?"

"You forget, sir," rejoined Mr. Streatfield, "that I have never beheld the sisters together until to-day. Though both were in the balcony when I first looked up at it, it was Miss Clara Langley alone who attracted my attention. Had I only received the smallest hint that the absent sister of Miss Jane Langley was her twin-sister, I would have seen her, at any sacrifice, before making my proposals. For it is my duty to confess to you, Mr. Langley (with the candor which is your undoubted due), that when I was first introduced to your daughter Jane, I felt an unaccountable impression that she was the same as, and yet different from, the lady whom I had seen in the balcony. Soon, however, the impression wore off. Under the circumstances, could I regard it as anything but a mere caprice, a lover's wayward fancy? I dismissed it from my mind, it ceased to affect me, until to-day, when I first discovered that it was a warning which I had most unhappily disregarded; that a terrible error had been committed, for which no one of us was to blame, but which was fraught with misery, undeserved misery, to us all."

"These, Mr. Streatfield, are explanations which may satisfy you," said Mr. Langley, in a milder tone, "but they cannot satisfy me, they will not satisfy the world. You have repudiated in the most public and most abrupt manner an engagement, in the fulfilment of which the honor and the happiness of my family are concerned. You have given me reasons for your conduct, it is true, but will those reasons restore my daughter the tranquillity which she has lost, perhaps for ever? will they stop the whisperings of calumny? will they carry conviction to those strangers to me, or enemies of mine, whose pleasure it may be to disbelieve them? You have placed both yourself and me, sir, in a position of embarrassment, nay, a position of danger and disgrace, from which the strongest reasons and best excuses cannot extricate us."

"I entreat you to believe," replied Mr. Streatfield, "that I deplore from my heart the error, the fault, if you will, of which I have been unconsciously guilty. I implore your pardon, both for what I said and did at your table to-day; but I cannot do more—I cannot and I dare not pronounce the marriage vows to your daughter with my lips, when I know that neither my conscience nor my heart can ratify them. The commonest justice, and the commonest respect towards a young lady who deserves both, and more than both, from every one who approaches her, strengthen me to persevere in the only course which it is consistent with honor and integrity for me to take."

"You appear to forget," said Mr. Langley, "that it is not merely your own honor, but the honor of others, that is to be considered in the course of conduct which you are now to pursue."

"I have by no means forgotten what is due to you," continued Mr. Streatfield, "or what responsibilities I have incurred from the nature of my intercourse with your

family. Do I put too much trust in your forbearance, if I now assure you, candidly and unreservedly, that I still place all my hopes of happiness in the prospect of becoming connected by marriage with a daughter of yours, Miss Clara Langley?"—Here the speaker paused. His position was becoming a delicate and a dangerous one; but he made no effort to withdraw from it. Almost bewildered by the pressing and perilous emergency of the moment, harassed by such a tumult of conflicting emotions within him as he had never known before, he risked the worst, with all the blindfold desperation of love. The angry flush was rising on Mr. Langley's cheek; it was evidently costing him a severe struggle to retain his assumed self-possession; but he did not speak. After an interval, Mr. Streatfield proceeded thus:—

"However unfortunately I may express myself, I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I am now speaking from my heart on a subject (to me) of the most vital importance. Place yourself in my situation; consider all that has happened; consider that this may be, for aught I know to the contrary, the last opportunity I may have of pleading my cause; and then say whether it is possible for me to conceal from you that I can only look to your forbearance and sympathy for permission to retrieve my error, to—to—Mr. Langley! I cannot choose expressions at such a moment as this. I can only tell you that the feeling with which I regarded your daughter Clara, when I first saw her, still remains what it was. I cannot analyse it; I cannot reconcile its apparent inconsistencies and contradictions; I cannot explain how, while I may seem to you and to every one to have varied and vacillated with insolent caprice, I have really remained, in my own heart and to my own conscience, true to my first sensations and my first convictions. I can only implore you not to condemn me to a life

of disappointment and misery, by judging me with hasty irritation. Favor me, so far at least, as to relate the conversation which has passed between us to your two daughters. Let me hear how it affects each of them towards me. Let me know what they are willing to think and ready to do under such unparalleled circumstances as have now occurred. I will wait your time and their time; I will abide by your decision and their decision, pronounced after the first poignant distress and irritation of this day's events have passed over."

Still Mr. Langley remained silent; the angry word was on his tongue; the contemptuous rejection of what he regarded for the moment as a proposition equally ill-timed and insolent, seemed bursting to his lips; but once more he restrained himself. He rose from his seat, and walked slowly backwards and forwards, deep in thought. Mr. Streatfield was too much overcome by his own agitation to plead his cause further by another word. There was a silence in the room now, which lasted for some time.

We have said that Mr. Langley was a man of the world. He was strongly attached to his children; but he had a little of the selfishness and much of the reverence for wealth of a man of the world. As he now endeavored to determine mentally on his proper course of action—to disentangle the whole case from all its mysterious intricacies—to view it, extraordinary as it was, in its proper bearings, his thoughts began gradually to assume what is called "a practical turn." He reflected that he had another daughter, besides the twin sisters, to provide for; and that he had two sons to settle in life. He was not rich enough to portion three daughters; and he had not interest enough to start his sons favorably in a career of eminence. Mr. Streatfield, on the contrary, was a man of great wealth, and of great "connexions" among people in power. Was such a son-in-law to be

rejected, even after all that had happened, without at least consulting his wife and daughters first? He thought not. Had not Mr. Streatfield, in truth, been the victim of a remarkable fatality, of an incredible accident, and were no allowances, under such circumstances, to be made for him? He began to think there were. Reflecting thus, he determined at length to proceed with moderation and caution at all hazards: and regained composure enough to continue the conversation in a cold, but still polite, tone.

"I will commit myself, sir, to no agreement or promise whatever," he began, "nor will I consider this interview in any respect as a conclusive one, either on your side or mine; but if I think, on consideration, that it is desirable that our conversation should be repeated to my wife and daughters, I will make them acquainted with it, and will let you know the result. In the meantime, I think you will agree with me, that it is most fit that the next communications between us should take place by letter alone."

Mr. Streatfield was not slow in taking the hint conveyed by Mr. Langley's last words. After what had occurred, and until something was definitively settled, he felt that the suffering and suspense which he was already enduring would be increased tenfold if he remained longer in the same house with the twin-sisters—the betrothed of one, the lover of the other! Murmuring a few inaudible words of acquiescence in the arrangement which had just been proposed to him, he left the room. The same evening he quitted Langley Hall. The next morning the remainder of the guests departed, their curiosity to know all the particulars of what had happened remaining ungratified. They were simply informed that an extraordinary and unexpected obstacle had arisen to delay the wedding; that no blame attached to any one in the matter; and that as soon as everything had been finally determined, everything

would be explained. Until then, it was not considered necessary to enter in any way into particulars. By the middle of the day every visitor had left the house; and a strange and melancholy spectacle it presented when they were all gone. Rooms were now empty and silent, which the day before had been filled with animated groups, and had echoed with merry laughter. In one apartment, the fittings for the series of "Tableaux" which had been proposed, remained half completed; the dresses that were to have been worn lay scattered on the floor; the carpenter who had come to proceed with his work, gathered up his tools in ominous silence, and departed as quickly as he could. Here lay books, still open at the last page read; there was an album, with the drawing of the day before unfinished, and the color-box unclosed by its side. On the deserted billiard-table, the position of the "cues" and balls showed traces of an interrupted game. Flowers were scattered on the rustic tables in the garden, half made into nosegays, and beginning to wither already. The very dogs wandered in a moody, unsettled way about the house, missing the friendly hands that had fondled and fed them for so many days past, and whining impatiently in the deserted drawing-rooms. The social desolation of the scene was miserably complete in all its aspects.

Immediately after the departure of his guests, Mr. Langley had a long interview with his wife. He repeated to her the conversation which had taken place between Mr. Streatfield and himself, and received from her in return such an account of the conduct of his daughter, under the trial that had befallen her, as filled him with equal astonishment and admiration. It was a new revelation to him of the character of his own child.

"As soon as the violent symptoms had subsided," said Mrs. Langley, in answer to her husband's first inquiries—"as

soon as the hysterical fit was subdued, Jane seemed suddenly to assume a new character—to become another person. She begged that the doctor might be released from his attendance, and that she might be left alone with me and her sister Clara. When every one else had quitted the room, she continued to sit in the easy-chair, where we had at first placed her, covering her face with her hands. She entreated us not to speak to her for a short time, and except that she shuddered occasionally, sat quite still and silent. When she at last looked up, we were shocked to see the deadly paleness of her face, and the strange alteration that had come over her expression; but she spoke to us so coherently, so solemnly even, that we were amazed; we knew not what to think or what to do; it hardly seemed to be our Jane who was now speaking to us."

"What did she say?" asked Mr. Langley, eagerly.

"She said that the first feeling of her heart, at that moment, was gratitude on her own account. She thanked God that the terrible discovery had not been made too late, when her married life might have been a life of estrangement and misery. Up to the moment when Mr. Streatfield had uttered that one fatal exclamation, she had loved him, she told us, fondly and fervently; now, no explanation, no repentance (if either were tendered), no earthly persuasion or command (in case Mr. Streatfield should think himself bound, as a matter of atonement, to hold his rash engagement), could ever induce her to become his wife."

"Mr. Streatfield will not test her resolution," said Mr. Langley, bitterly. "He deliberately repeated his repudiation of his engagement in this room; nay more, he——"

"I have something important to say to you from Jane on this point," interrupted Mrs. Langley. "After she had spoken the first few words which I have already repeated

to you, she told us that she had been thinking—thinking more calmly, perhaps, than one could imagine—on all that had happened; on what Mr. Streatfield had said at the dinner-table; on the momentary glance of recognition which she had seen pass between him and her sister Clara, whose accidental absence, during the whole period of Mr. Streatfield's intercourse with us in London, she now remembered and reminded me of. The cause of the fatal error, and the manner in which it had occurred, seemed to be already known to her, as if by intuition. We entreated her to refrain from speaking on the subject for the present, but she answered that it was her duty to speak on it—her duty to propose something which would alleviate the suspense and distress we were all enduring on her account. No words can describe to you her fortitude, her noble endurance."

Mrs. Langley's voice faltered as she pronounced the last words. It was some minutes ere she became sufficiently composed to proceed thus:—

"I am charged with a message to you from Jane—I should say charged with her entreaties, that you will not suspend our intercourse with Mr. Streatfield, or view his conduct in any other than a merciful light—as conduct for which accident and circumstances are alone to blame. After she had given me this message to you, she turned to Clara, who sat weeping by her side, completely overcome, and kissing her, said that they were to blame, if any one was to be blamed in the matter, for being so much alike as to make all who saw them apart doubt which was Clara and which was Jane. She said this with a faint smile, and an effort to speak playfully, which touched us to the heart. Then, in a tone and manner which I can never forget, she asked her sister—charging her on their mutual affection and mutual confidence, to answer sincerely—if she had

noticed Mr. Streatfield on the day of the levee, and had afterwards remembered him at the dinner-table, as he had noticed and remembered her. It was only after Jane had repeated this appeal still more earnestly and affectionately, that Clara summoned courage and composure enough to confess that she had noticed Mr. Streatfield on the day of the levee, had thought of him afterwards during her absence from London, and had recognised him at our table, as he had recognised her."

"Is it possible! I own I had not anticipated—not thought for one moment of that," said Mr. Langley.

"Perhaps," continued his wife, "it is best that you should see Jane now, and judge for yourself. For my part, her noble resignation under this great trial has so astonished and impressed me, that I only feel competent to advise as she advises, to act as she thinks fit. I begin to think that it is not we who are to guide her, but she who is to guide us."

Mr. Langley lingered irresolute for a few minutes, then quitted the room, and proceeded alone to Jane Langley's apartment.

When he knocked at the door, it was opened by Clara. There was an expression, partly of confusion, partly of sorrow, on her face; and when her father stopped as if to speak to her, she merely pointed into the room, and hurried away without uttering a word.

Mr. Langley had been prepared by his wife for the change that had taken place in his daughter since the day before; but he felt startled, almost overwhelmed, as he now looked on her. One of the poor girl's most prominent personal attractions, from her earliest years, had been the beauty of her complexion; and now the freshness and the bloom had entirely departed from her face; it seemed absolutely colorless. Her expression, too, appeared to Mr.

Langley's eyes, to have undergone a melancholy alteration; to have lost its youthfulness suddenly; to have assumed a strange character of firmness and thoughtfulness, which he had never observed in it before. She was sitting by an open window, commanding a lovely view of wide, sunny landscape; a Bible, which her mother had given her, lay open on her knees—she was reading in it as her father entered. For the first time in his life, he paused, speechless, as he approached to speak to one of his own children.

"I am afraid I look very ill," she said, holding out her hand to him; "but I am better than I look; I shall be quite well in a day or two. Have you heard my message, father? Have you been told——"

"My love, we will not speak of it yet; we will wait a few days," said Mr. Langley.

"You have always been so kind to me," she continued, in less steady tones, "that I am sure you will let me go on. I have very little to say, but that little must be said now, and then we need never recur to it again. Will you consider all that has happened, as something forgotten? You have heard already what it is I entreat you to do; will you let him—Mr. Streatfield"—(she stopped, her voice failed for a moment, but she recovered herself again almost immediately). "Will you let Mr. Streatfield remain here, or recall him if he is gone, and give him an opportunity of explaining himself to my sister? If poor Clara should refuse to see him for my sake, pray do not listen to her. I am sure this is what ought to be done; I have been thinking of it very calmly, and I feel that it is right. And there is something more I have to beg of you, father. It is, that, while Mr. Streatfield is here, you will allow me to go and stay with my aunt. You know how fond she is of me. Her house is not a day's journey from home. It is best for everybody (much the best for me) that I should not remain

here at present; and—and—dear father—I have always been your spoiled child, and I know you will indulge me still. If you will do what I ask you, I shall soon get over this heavy trial. I shall be well again if I am away at my aunt's—if——"

She paused; and putting one trembling arm around her father's neck, hid her face on his breast. For some minutes, Mr. Langley could not trust himself to answer her. There was something, not deeply touching only, but impressive and sublime, about the moral heroism of this young girl, whose heart and mind, hitherto wholly inexperienced in the harder and darker emergencies of life, now rose in the strength of their native purity superior to the bitterest, cruellest trial that either could undergo; whose patience and resignation, called forth for the first time by a calamity which suddenly thwarted the purposes and paralysed the affections that had been destined to endure for a life, could thus appear at once in the fullest maturity of virtue and beauty. As the father thought of these things; as he vaguely and imperfectly estimated the extent of the daughter's sacrifice; as he reflected on the nature of the affliction that had befallen her, which combined in itself a fatality that none could have foreseen, a fault that could neither be repaired nor resented, a judgment against which there was no appeal, and then remembered how this affliction had been borne, with what words and what actions it had been met, he felt that it would be almost a profanation to judge the touching petition just addressed to him, by the criterion of his worldly doubts and his worldly wisdom. His eye fell on the Bible, still open beneath it; he remembered the little child who was set in the midst of the disciples, as teacher and example to all; and when at length he spoke in answer to his daughter, it was not to direct or to advise, but to comfort and comply.

They delayed her removal for a few days, to see if she faltered in her resolution, if her bodily weakness increased; but she never wavered, nothing in her appearance changed, either for better or for worse. A week after the startling scene at the dinner-table, she was living in the strictest retirement in the house of her aunt. About the period of her departure, a letter was received from Mr. Streatfield. It was little more than a recapitulation of what he had already said to Mr. Langley, expressed, however, on this occasion, in stronger and at the same time in more respectful terms. The letter was answered briefly, he was informed that nothing had as yet been determined on, but that the communication would bring him a final reply.

Two months passed. During that time, Jane Langley was frequently visited at her aunt's house, by her father and mother. She still remained calm and resolute; still looked pale and thoughtful, as at first. Doctors were consulted; they talked of a shock to the nervous system; of great hope from time, and their patient's strength of mind, and of the necessity of acceding to her wishes in all things. Then the advice of the aunt was sought. She was a woman of an eccentric, masculine character, who had herself experienced a love-disappointment in early life, and had never married. She gave her opinion unreservedly and abruptly, as she always gave it. "Do as Jane tells you," said the old lady, severely; "that poor child has more moral courage and determination than all the rest of you put together. I know better than anybody what a sacrifice she has had to make; but she has made it, and made it nobly—like a heroine, as some people would say; like a good, high-minded, courageous girl, as I say; do as she tells you; let that poor selfish fool of a man have his way, and marry her sister, he has made one mistake already about a face, see if he does not find out some day

that he has made another, about a wife, let him:—Jane is too good for him or for any other man; leave her to me; let her stop here; she shan't lose by what has happened; you know this place is mine—I mean it to be hers when I'm dead; you know I've got some money, I shall leave it to her. I've made my will, it's all done and settled; go back home, send for the man, and tell Clara to marry him without any more fuss! You wanted my opinion, there it is for you!"

At last, Mr. Langley decided. The important letter was written, which recalled Mr. Streatfield to Langley Hall. As Jane had foreseen, Clara at first refused to hold any communication with him; but a letter from her sister, and the remonstrances of her father, soon changed her resolution. There was nothing in common between the twin-sisters but their personal resemblance. Clara had been guided all her life by the opinions of others, and she was guided by them now.

Once permitted the opportunity of pleading his cause, Mr. Streatfield did not neglect his own interests. It would be little to our purpose to describe the doubts and difficulties which delayed at first the progress of his second courtship—pursued as it was under circumstances, not only extraordinary, but unprecedented. It is no longer with him or with Clara Langley, that the interest of our story is connected. Suffice it to say, that he ultimately overcame all the young lady's scruples; and that a few months afterwards, some of Mr. Langley's intimate friends found themselves again assembled round his table as wedding guests, and congratulating Mr. Streatfield on his approaching union with Clara, as they had already congratulated him scarcely a year back, on his approaching union with Jane!

The social ceremonies of the wedding-day were performed soberly—almost sadly. Some of the guests (espe-

cially the unmarried ladies) thought that Miss Clara had allowed herself to be won too easily—others were picturing to themselves the situation of the poor girl who was absent, and contributed little to the gaiety of the party. On this occasion, however, nothing occurred to interrupt the proceedings; the marriage took place; and immediately after it, Mr. Streatfield and his bride started for a tour on the Continent.

On their departure, Jane Langley returned home. She made no reference whatever to her sister's marriage; and no one mentioned it in her presence. Still the color did not return to her cheek, or the old gaiety to her manner. The shock that she had suffered had left its traces on her for life. But there was no evidence that she was sinking under the remembrances which neither time nor resolution could banish. The strong, pure heart had undergone a change, but not a deterioration. All that had been brilliant in her character was gone; but all that was noble in it remained. Never had her intercourse with her family and her friends been so affectionate and so kindly as it was now. When, after a long absence, Mr. Streatfield and his wife returned to England, it was observed, at the first meeting with them, that the momentary confusion and embarrassment were on their side, not on hers. During their stay at Langley Hall, she showed not the slightest disposition to avoid them. No member of the family welcomed them more cordially; entered into their plans and projects more readily; and bade them farewell with a kinder or better grace, when they departed for their own home.

Our tale is nearly ended; what remains of it must comprise the history of many years in the compass of a few words.

Time passed on, and death and change told of its lapse among the family at Langley Hall. Five years after the

events above related, Mr. Langley died, and was followed to the grave shortly afterwards by his wife. Of their two sons, the eldest was rising into good practice at the bar; the younger had become *attaché* to a foreign embassy. Their third daughter was married, and living at the family seat of her husband, in Scotland. Mr. and Mrs. Streatfield had children of their own, now, to occupy their time and absorb their care. The career of life was over for some, the purposes of life had altered for others, Jane Langley alone still remained unchanged.

She now lived entirely with her aunt. At intervals, as their worldly duties and worldly avocations permitted them, the other members of the family, or one or two intimate friends, came to the house. Offers of marriage were made to her, but were all declined.

The first, last love of her girlish days, abandoned as a hope and crushed as a passion, living only as a quiet grief, as a pure remembrance, still kept its watch, as guardian and defender over her heart. Years passed on and worked no change in the sad uniformity of her life, until the death of her aunt left her mistress of the house in which she had hitherto been a guest. Then it was observed that she made fewer and fewer efforts to vary the tenor of her existence, to forget her old remembrances for awhile in the society of others. Such invitations as reached her from relations and friends were more frequently declined than accepted. She was growing old herself now; and, with each advancing year, the busy pageant of the outer world presented less and less that could attract her eye.

So she began to surround herself, in her solitude, with the favorite books that she had studied, with the favorite music that she had played, in the days of her hopes and her happiness. Everything that was associated, however slightly, with that past period, now acquired a character of

inestimable value in her eyes, as aiding her mind to seclude itself more and more strictly in the sanctuary of its early recollections. Was it weakness in her to live thus; to abandon the world and the world's interests as one who had no hope or part in either? Had she earned the right, by the magnitude and resolution of her sacrifice, thus to indulge in the sad luxury of fruitless remembrance? Who shall say—who shall presume to decide that cannot think with *her* thoughts, and look back with *her* recollections?

Thus she lived—alone, and yet not lonely; without hope, but with no despair; separate and apart from the world around her, except when she approached it by her charities to the poor, and her succor to the afflicted; by her occasional interviews with the surviving members of her family and a few old friends, when they sought her in her calm retreat; and by the little presents which she constantly sent to brothers' and sisters' children, who worshipped, as their invisible good genius, "the kind lady" whom most of them had never seen. Such was her existence throughout the closing years of her life; such did it continue—calm and blameless—to the last.

# The Judge who always Anticipated.

As a judge, Lord Avonmore had one great fault; he was apt to take up a first impression of a cause, and it was very difficult afterwards to obliterate it. The advocate, therefore, had not only to struggle against the real obstacle presented to him by the case itself, but also with the imaginary ones created by the hasty anticipation of the judge. Curran was one day most seriously annoyed by this habit of Lord Avonmore, and he took the following whimsical method of correcting it. (The reader must remember that the object of the narrator was, by a tedious and malicious procrastination, to irritate his hearer into the vice he was so anxious to eradicate.) They were to dine together at the house of a common friend, and a large party were assembled, many of whom witnessed the occurrences of the morning. Curran, contrary to all his usual habits, was late for dinner, and at length arrived in the most admirably affected agitation.

"Why, Mr. Curran, you have kept us a full hour waiting dinner for you," grumbled out Lord Avonmore.

"Oh, my dear lord, I regret it much; you must know

it is not my custom; but I've just been witness to a most melancholy occurrence."

"My God! you seem terribly moved by it; take a glass of wine. What was it; what was it?"

"I will tell you, my lord, the moment I can collect myself. I had been detained at court—in the Court of Chancery—your lordship knows the Chancellor sits late."

"I do—I do; but go on."

"Well, my lord, I was hurrying here as fast as I could—I did not even change my dress—I hope I shall be excused for coming in my boots."

"Poh, poh, never mind your boots; the point—come at once to the point of the story."

"Oh, I will, my good lord, in a moment. I walked here; I would not even wait to get the carriage ready; it would have taken time, you know. Now there is a market exactly in the road by which I had to pass; your lordship may perhaps recollect the market, do you?"

"To be sure I do; go on, Curran—go on with the story."

"I am very glad your lordship remembers the market, for I totally forgot the name of it—the name—the name—"

"What the devil signifies the name of it, sir? It's the Castle Market."

"Your lordship is perfectly right, it is called the Castle Market. Well, I was passing through that very identical Castle Market, when I observed a butcher preparing to kill a calf. He had a huge knife in his hand; it was as sharp as a razor. The calf was standing behind him; he drew the knife to plunge it into the animal. Just as he was in the act of doing so, a little boy about four years old—his only son, the loveliest little boy I ever saw—ran suddenly across his path, and he killed—oh, my God! he killed—"

"The child! the child! the child!" vociferated Lord Avonmore.

"No, my lord, *the calf!*" continued Curran, very coolly; "he killed the calf, but your lordship is in the habit of anticipating."

The universal laugh was thus raised against his lordship; and Curran declared that, often afterwards, a first impression was removed more easily from the Court of Exchequer by the recollection of the calf in Castle Market than by all the eloquence of the entire profession.

# The Satisfaction of a Gentleman.

"SIR, I will have satisfaction!"

The words were uttered in a loud and angry tone by a military looking personage in the saloon of one of our most respectable clubs, frequented by opulent merchants, country squires, bankers, and lords, with a sprinkling of naval and military gentlemen.

"Sir, I will have satisfaction!" so saying, and buttoning up his military surtout with the air of a man who has determined on some desperate course, the offended hero vanished out of the room. He was immediately observed to mount a handsome phaeton, drawn by a pair of smart greys. His tiger leaped up behind, and the equipage drove off with a furious clatter up St. James's street.

"Satisfaction!" Of course every one within hearing knows the meaning of the words, when uttered by a "man of honor and a gentleman." In fashionable circles "satisfaction" means the chance of projecting an ounce of lead in the shape of a bullet into some offending friend's body; but the man of wounded honor is equally "satisfied" if his friend sends the bullet into his own head: and if his head resists it, then he may thank the thickness of his skull, rather than the

soundness of his brains. Two men of honor fall out about the most trifling matter, perhaps, inflamed with wine, begin to talk angrily,—and one of them uses an offensive word; instantly the other calls for "satisfaction." The two "friends" —call them fools rather—come out in the cool grey of the next morning with two other "friends" equally foolish, and then, in some chalk-pit or ravine, each sets himself up as a target for the other. Two bullets instantly speed upon their fool's errand. They miss. Well! the two seconds step up, —"interfere to prevent further hostilities,"—declaring that their friends' "honor is satisfied,"—and they march off to breakfast, thinking they have done some valiant feat: or, the balls hit their mark; one, if not both, lie on the grass; a bullet has lodged in the spine of one, and another bullet in the shoulder-joint of the other. Forth steps a wiry man with a box of implements, devised for the cutting out, extracting, or wrenching away of the little bullets from flesh and bone. Ah! with one of them it is too late; he lies on the grass, breathless, his lips apart, his eyes glazed:—he is dead: he has had his desire,—"the satisfaction of a gentleman." The other, after submitting to the tortures of bullet extraction, is borne from the field on a litter, "satisfied:" he has "killed his man." Such is "honor" in the mouths of fools.

But we must return to our story;—Scarcely had the gentleman of wounded honor rushed out of the house, ere the friends of the other assembled round him to ask, "What is the matter? And how did you fall out?"

"The matter," said the offending gentleman, who sat somewhat stupified at the abrupt and threatening exit of his military friend; "why, the fellow is as irascible as a turkey-cock. We fell into a dispute about politics, about which he knows positively nothing. He became more and more insolent, and his arguments were at length so absurd, that I

could not help bursting out laughing, and telling him he was a bullet-headed fool."

"Is that all?" said a city merchant; "why everybody knew that long ago!"

"Aye, but to tell him of it," said another; "I fear mischief will come of it."

A considerable damp seemed to have been thrown upon the spirits of all the company, and the circle gradually broke up. The gentleman who had been the cause of the explosion, at length rose and went home, not over free from anxiety. He now regretted the use of the offensive word, and yet he felt that it had not been undeserved. Not being a military man—for he was a banker in good business, and with extensive connexions—he could scarcely divine what the other would do in reference to the "satisfaction" which he had spoken of; yet he had some unpleasant misgivings about the issue.

The banker was not left long in doubt. Next morning, after an anxious night, a thundering rat-tat came to his door. Immediately thereafter, a gentleman was admitted. The banker rose up to meet him, and recognised him for a military gentleman—in fact, the major of the other's corps.

"I have the honor," said he, "of waiting upon you at the instance of my friend, the Honorable Captain Sir Eustace Fitz-Giles; this letter will explain to you the object of my visit."

The banker opened the missive. It was written in a thunder-and-lightning hand, and smelt frightfully of gunpowder; in fact, there was no misunderstanding it.

"I will call upon the captain," said the banker. "I will do so at once."

"The usual mode in such matters, as you are aware, is to refer me to your friend."

"In good time, sir," answered the banker; "but first I would see the captain himself."

"Very well," said the major; "but the usual course in such matters——"

"Yes, yes!" said the banker; "I know; but I wish to see the captain himself."

"He will refer you to me."

"Very well! then I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again;" and he bowed the major politely out.

The banker went straightway to the choleric captain. "Sir," said he to him, "I am not at all ashamed to confess myself in the wrong, in having used towards you the expression which has given you offence. I beg to withdraw it, and I apologize for it with all my heart."

"Too late, sir, by Jove! too late!" said the captain, twirling his moustache. "You must meet me, sir; nothing short of that will do. Had I knocked you down on the spot, an apology might have been accepted; but I did not knock you down, and your apology comes too late. I refer you to my friend, who is authorized by me to settle all necessary preliminaries. Name to him your time and place, and go home and settle your affairs."

The banker was thunderstruck. He considered with himself for a while. "Well, sir!" said he at length, "if it must be so, meet me to-morrow at two o'clock, in the large field north of —— Lodge, in the —— Road, with your friend, and a pair of pistols."

"Enough, sir," said the brusque captain; and they parted.

The parties were on the ground at the time appointed. The captain was accompanied by his friend the major. The banker was attended by a gentleman in a suit of professional black—a very unmilitary, and most civil-looking personage. As they approached, the major suddenly step-

ped before his principal, and addressing the banker's second, said:–

"It was perfectly understood, sir, that pistols were to be the weapons employed on this occasion; but here, sir, if I mistake not, you bring a blunderbuss under your arm."

"I beg your pardon," said the other, drawing the instrument forth; "it is not a blunderbuss, but a telescope."

"And what, in Heaven's name, is the meaning of this? I hope it is not meant as an additional insult to my principal?"

"Oh! by no means," said the banker, who proceeded to inform the major of his previous and present readiness to apologize, assuring him that he had intended no offence to his friend the captain, and that he was now anxious to explain. The apology was declined as before, and an explanation was demanded.

"In the first place," said the banker, "I earnestly beg that you, captain, will look through this telescope."

"What, sir, I?—Look through a telescope? By Heaven, sir, what foolery is this?"

The banker's second claimed to be heard. "I insist," said he, "that this is most serious and important to my cli——, to my friend."

"It is such a breach of all the customary forms," said the captain. "Such a proposal is quite intolerable."

"I regret," said the banker to the major, "that I should have to urge this request; but it is to me a most necessary preliminary. Will you, major, do me the favor to apply your eye to the telescope? I put it to you as a gentleman and an officer, whether there is any offence in the request?"

"Nay, sir," said the major, "I do not say that; but it seems to me so absurd—so contrary to the established rules in such cases."

"Here, sir," said the banker, holding up the telescope,

"place your eye to it for but one moment—there—in that direction!"

"Where!" said the major, carelessly applying his eye to the telescope. He looked for an instant. "Egad!" said he, "I see a very fine woman walking about on a grass-plat, with a little trot of a child in one hand, and two others pranking round her. But what, I should like to know, has this to do with the matter in hand?"

"Everything," said the banker, with a serious face; "that lady, sir, is my wife. Those children are mine and her's; and we are all mutually attached."

"Pshaw!" said the captain; "what is that to *me?* You should have thought of this before."

"I know it is nothing to *you*, sir," said the banker, "as you have no wife or children. I believe I am correct in saying that you have no wife or children. Now then, I ask, *do* we meet on equal terms?"

"Why no,—certainly not," said the major, "but it is too late to think of this on the very ground; it is quite unformal—this discussion; it is really quite,—quite;—" and hereupon the major took a huge pinch of snuff to fill up his simile.

"I warned you to settle all your affairs," broke in the captain, as if a sudden bright thought had occurred to him.

"True," said the banker, pointing to the distant family group, "but I could not settle them. I have settled everything else."

The banker's second now ventured to observe, that as the captain's second had admitted the parties about to contend were not on equal terms, they should be made equal, or as near as possibly so, before the actual commencement of hostilities; and he appealed to them to do this as "men of honor and gentlemen."

"Well, there is certainly a show of reason, and that

sort of thing, in what you say," observed the major. "But how, in the name of goodness, is that to be effected?"

"Nothing easier," exclaimed the gentleman in black. "Your friend the captain has an independent income of fifteen hundred per annum, and no family; whereas the income of my friend—though he has some little property—mainly depends upon his own exertions: and he has a wife and three children. Now, if the captain should shoot him, he ought to make over five hundred a year to his family, and thus the parties would be upon equal terms."

"Putting affection out of the question," added the banker.

The major, at this, looked blank and puzzled; the captain *all* astonishment.

"It would only be putting down your handsome phaeton and pair," rejoined the banker's second, calmly.

"Oh, sir! ah! yes, indeed!" ejaculated the captain, reddening up to the ears.

"But supposing I acceded to this most irregular proceeding," said the major, "there is no time for it now, as I cannot consent to withdraw my principal from the field without an exchange of shots."

"That is not at all necessary," said the banker. "This gentleman is my attorney." Whereat, on the instant, the little man in black whipped from beneath his coat a deed on parchment, ready filled up, and wanting nothing but the attachment of the signatures.

The captain and the major exchanged looks of blank rage. They saw that, in common parlance, it was "a sell;" and they began to storm.

"A most absurd proceeding!—mercenary proposal!"—ejaculated the captain. "Put down my phaeton, indeed? Why, sir, this is beyond a joke."

"It is, indeed, a most serious matter, sirs," said the

banker. "Do you think, sir, whether I would not be justified in considering it as something more than an 'absurd proceeding' and a pretty 'joke,' to be *put down* dead here, and leave my wife and children to penury? I know very well, sir, you are a rare shot, and can snuff a candle with a pistol bullet. That dexterity I can't pretend to, so in any case I run the greatest risk. Yet I am ready to pit my life against your phaeton and pair."

The major looked more perplexed that ever. The captain more foolish and puzzled.

"Again, gentlemen, if I should be killed, my wife and children will absolutely need the money; but if I kill the captain, his property is absolutely of no sort of use to him after his funeral expenses are paid. Nor is my proposal without precedent. Upon such occasions, men of refined honor and high courage have thought they could never do enough. When Best shot Lord Camelford, his lordship, on his deathbed, left his antagonist, who was in very poor circumstances, a handsome income, rejoicing, no doubt, that he had lived long enough to do such an act of magnanimity and finished honor. I never fired at a man as a mark in my life; I am sure to be shot. So you see my proposal is only a fair one; and as I make it to men of honor, I expect it to be acceded to."

"Oh, but!—yes, but!—you, sir!" exclaimed the captain. "Really," interrupted the major, biting his lips, "I really think, that, as men of finished honor, we must accede to the proposal."

The banker now flatly refused to fight on any other terms, putting it directly to the major as the most refined point of duelling honor that could be manifested on the occasion, till the two officers, though excessively provoked and annoyed, could no longer refuse their consent. The parchment was handed to them by the attorney, who saw

it properly signed, and then the principals took their stand at fifteen paces' distance.

The banker had the first fire. Not wishing to be banished his country, or get into prison, or be tried for manslaughter or murder, he took very good care to fire wide of his mark, and away flew his innocent ball like a humming bird across the fields.

Then came the captain's turn. "Now," whispered the major, "aim low; keep steady—now—you've got him."

"Got him!" stammered the captain, his face turning blue, and his jaws falling. "Got him! put down my pha——, pay five hundred a year for being called a bullet-headed fool, and so prove it. Will you pay the money if I hit him?"

Away sped the bullet; but of course it did not hit the banker, though it whistled rather too close past the lawyer's ear, who had forgotten to have a similar agreement for himself in case of accidents.

The antagonists then shook hands. The major withdrew the Honorable Captain Sir Eustace Fitz-Giles from the field, declaring that "his honor was satisfied;" and the banker went home to his wife and children.

But it is not always that those "meetings of honor" so end.

# The Counter-Stroke.

Just after breakfast one fine spring morning in 1837, an advertisement in the *Times* for a curate caught and fixed my attention. The salary was sufficiently remunerative for a bachelor, and the parish, as I personally knew, one of the most pleasantly situated in all Somersetshire. Having said that, the reader will readily understand that it could not have been a hundred miles from Taunton. I instantly wrote inclosing testimonials, with which the Rev. Mr. Townley, the rector, was so entirely satisfied, that the return-post brought me a positive engagement, unclogged with the slightest objections to one or two subsidiary items I had stipulated for, and accompanied by an invitation to make the rectory my home till I could conveniently suit myself elsewhere. This was both kind and handsome: and the next day but one I took coach, with a light heart, for my new destination. It thus happened that I became acquainted, and in some degree mixed up with the train of events it is my present purpose to relate.

The rector I found to be a stout, portly gentleman, whose years already reached to between sixty and seventy.

So many winters, although they had plentifully besprinkled his hair with grey, shone out with ruddy brightness in his still handsome face, and keen, kindly, bright-hazel eyes; and his voice, hearty and ringing, had not as yet one quaver of age in it. I met him at breakfast on the morning after my arrival, and his reception of me was most friendly. We had spoken together but for a few minutes, when one of the French windows, that led from the breakfast-room into a shrubbery and flower-garden, gently opened and admitted a lady, just then, as I afterwards learned, in her nineteenth spring. I use this term almost unconsciously, for I cannot even now, in the glowing summer of her life, dissociate her image from that season of youth and joyousness. She was introduced to me, with old-fashioned simplicity, as "my grand-daughter, Agnes Townley." It is difficult to look at beauty through other men's eyes, and in the present instance I feel that I should fail miserably in the endeavor to stamp upon this blank, dead paper, any adequate idea of the fresh loveliness, the rosebud beauty of that young girl. I will merely say, that her perfectly Grecian head, wreathed with wavy *bandeaux* of bright hair, undulated with golden light, vividly brought to my mind Raphael's halo-tinted portraitures of the Virgin—with this difference, that in place of the holy calm and resignation of the painting, there was in Agnes Townley a sparkling youth and life, that even amidst the heat and glare of a crowded ball-room or of a theatre, irresistibly suggested and recalled the freshness and perfume of the morning—of a cloudless, rosy morning of May. And, far higher charm than feature-beauty, however exquisite, a sweetness of disposition, a kind gentleness of mind and temper, was evidenced in every line of her face, in every accent of the low-pitched, silver voice, that breathed through lips made only to smile.

Let me own, that I was greatly struck by so remarkable a combination of rare endowments; and this, I think, the sharp-eyed rector must have perceived, or he might not perhaps have been so immediately communicative with respect to the near prospects of his idolized grand-child, as he was the moment the young lady, after presiding at the breakfast-table, had withdrawn.

"We shall have gay doings, Mr. Tyrrel, at the rectory shortly," he said. "Next Monday three weeks will, with the blessing of God, be Agnes Townley's wedding-day."

"Wedding-day!"

"Yes," rejoined the rector, turning towards and examining some flowers which Miss Townley had brought in and placed on the table. "Yes, it has been for some time settled that Agnes shall on that day be united in holy wedlock to Mr. Arbuthnot."

"Mr. Arbuthnot of Elm Park?"

"A great match, is it not, in a worldly point of view?" replied Mr. Townley, with a pleasant smile at the tone of my exclamation. "And much better than that: Robert Arbuthnot is a young man of high and noble nature, as well as devotedly attached to Agnes. He will, I doubt not, prove in every respect a husband deserving and worthy of her; and that from the lips of a doting old grandpapa must be esteemed high praise. You will see him presently."

I did see him often, and quite agreed in the rector's estimate of his future grandson-in-law. I have not frequently seen a finer looking young man—his age was twenty-six; and certainly one of a more honorable and kindly spirit, of a more genial temper than he, has never come within my observation. He had drawn a great prize in the matrimonial lottery, and, I felt, deserved his high fortune.

They were married at the time agreed upon, and the

day was kept not only at Elm Park, and in its neighborhood, but throughout "our" parish, as a general holiday. And, strangely enough—at least I have never met with another instance of the kind—it was held by our entire female community, high as well as low, that the match was a perfectly equal one, notwithstanding that wealth and high worldly position were entirely on the bridegroom's side. In fact, that nobody less in the social scale than the representative of an old territorial family ought, in the nature of things, to have aspired to the hand of Agnes Townley, appeared to have been a foregone conclusion with everybody. This will give the reader a truer and more vivid impression of the bride, than any words or colors I might use.

The days, weeks, months of wedded life, flew over Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot without a cloud, save a few dark but transitory ones which I saw now and then flit over the husband's countenance as the time when he should become a father drew near, and came to be more and more spoken of. "I should not survive her," said Mr. Arbuthnot, one day in reply to a chance observation of the rector's, "nor indeed desire to do so." The grey-headed man seized and warmly pressed the husband's hand, and tears of sympathy filled his eyes; yet did he, nevertheless, as in duty bound, utter grave words on the sinfulness of despair under any circumstances, and the duty, in all trials, however, heavy, of patient submission to the will of God. But the venerable gentleman spoke in a hoarse and broken voice, and it was easy to see he *felt* with Mr. Arbuthnot that the reality of an event, the bare possibility of which shook them so terribly, were a cross too heavy for human strength to bear and live.

It was of course decided that the expected heir or heiress should be intrusted to a wet-nurse, and a Mrs. Danby,

the wife of a miller living not very far from the rectory, was engaged for that purpose. I had frequently seen the woman; and her name, as the rector and I were one evening gossiping over our tea, on some subject or other that I forget, came up.

"A likely person," I remarked; "healthy, very good-looking, and one might make oath a true-hearted creature. But there is withal a timidity, a frightenedness in her manner at times which, if I may hazard a perhaps uncharitable conjecture, speaks ill for that smart husband of hers."

"You have hit the mark precisely, my dear sir. Danby is a sorry fellow, and a domestic tyrant to boot. His wife, who is really a good, but meek-hearted person, lived with us once. How old do you suppose her to be?"

"Five-and-twenty perhaps."

"Six years more than that. She has a son of the name of Harper by a former marriage, who is in his tenth year. Anne wasn't a widow long. Danby was caught by her good looks, and she by the bait of a well provided home. Unless, however, her husband gives up his corn speculations, she will not, I think, have that much longer."

"Corn speculations! Surely Danby has no means adequate to indulgence in such a game as that?"

"Not he. But about two years ago he bought, on credit, I believe, a considerable quantity of wheat, and prices happening to fly suddenly up just then, he made a large profit. This has quite turned his head, which, by the by, was never, as Cockneys say, quite rightly screwed on."

The announcement of a visitor interrupted anything further the rector might have to say, and I soon afterwards went home.

A sad accident occurred about a month subsequent to the foregoing conversation. The rector was out riding upon a usually quiet horse, which all at once took it into

its head to shy at a scarecrow, it must have seen a score of times, and thereby threw its rider. Help was fortunately at hand, and the reverend gentleman was instantly conveyed home, when it was found that his left thigh was broken. Thanks, however, to his temperate habits, it was before long authoritatively pronounced that, although it would be a considerable time before he was released from confinement, it was not probable that the lusty winter of his life would be shortened by what had happened. Unfortunately, the accident threatened to have evil consequences in another quarter. Immediately after it occurred, one Matthews, a busy, thick-headed lout of a butcher, rode furiously off to Elm Park with the news. Mrs. Arbuthnot, who daily looked to be confined, was walking with her husband upon the lawn in front of the house, when the great burly blockhead rode up, and blurted out that the rector had been thrown from his horse, and it was feared killed!

The shock of such an announcement was of course overwhelming. A few hours afterwards, Mrs. Arbuthnot gave birth to a healthy male child, but the young mother's life, assailed by fever, was for many days utterly despaired of—for weeks held to tremble so evenly in the balance, that the slightest adverse circumstance might turn the scale deathwards. At length the black horizon that seemed to encompass us so hopelessly, lightened, and afforded the lover-husband a glimpse and hope of his vanished and well-nigh despaired of Eden. The promise was fulfilled. I was in the library with Mr. Arbuthnot awaiting the physician's morning report, very anxiously expected at the recovery, when Dr. Lindley entered the apartment in evidently cheerful mood.

"You have been causelessly alarmed," he said. "There is no fear whatever of a relapse. Weakness only remains, and that we shall slowly, perhaps, but certainly remove."

A gleam of lightning seemed to flash over Mr. Arbuthnot's expressive countenance. "Blessed be God!" he exclaimed. "And how," he added, "shall we manage respecting the child? She asks for it incessantly."

Mr. Arbuthnot's infant son, I should state, had been consigned immediately after its birth to the care of Mrs. Danby, who had herself been confined, also with a boy, about a fortnight previously. Scarlatina being prevalent in the neighborhood, Mrs. Danby was hurried away with the two children to a place near Bath, almost before she was able to bear the journey. Mr. Arbuthnot had not left his wife for an hour, and consequently had only seen his child for a few minutes just after it was born.

"With respect to the child," replied Dr. Lindley, "I am of opinion that Mrs. Arbuthnot may see it in a day or two. Say the third day from this, if all goes well. I think we may venture so far; but I will be present, for any untoward agitation might be perhaps instantly fatal."

This point provisionally settled, we all three went our several ways; I to cheer the still suffering rector with the good news.

The next day but one, Mr. Arbuthnot was in exuberant spirits. "Dr. Lindley's report is even more favorable than we had anticipated," he said; "and I start to-morrow morning, to bring Mrs. Danby and the child——" The postman's subdued but unmistakable knock interrupted him. "The nurse," he added, "is very attentive and punctual. She writes almost every day." A servant entered with a salver heaped with letters. Mr. Arbuthnot tossed them over eagerly, and seizing one, after glancing at the post mark, tore it eagerly open, muttering as he did so: "It is not the usual handwriting; but from her, no doubt."

"Merciful God!" I impulsively exclaimed, as I suddenly lifted my eyes to his. "What is the matter?"

A mortal pallor had spread over Mr. Arbuthnot's before animated features, and he was glaring at the letter in his hand as if a basilisk had suddenly confronted him. Another moment, and the muscles of his frame appeared to give way suddenly, and he dropped heavily into the easy chair from which he had risen to take the letters. I was terribly alarmed, and first loosening his neckerchief, for he seemed choking, I said: "Let me call some one;" and I turned to reach the bell, when he instantly seized my arms, and held me with a grip of iron. "No—no—no!" he hoarsely gasped; "water—water!" There was fortunately some on a side table. I handed it to him, and he drank eagerly. It appeared to revive him a little. He thrust the crumpled letter into his pocket, and said in a low, quick whisper: "There is some one coming! Not a word, remember—not a word!" At the same time he wheeled his chair half round, so that his back should be towards the servant we heard approaching.

"I am sent, sir," said Mrs. Arbuthnot's maid, "to ask if the post has arrived."

"Yes," replied Mr. Arbuthnot, with wonderful mastery of his voice. "Tell your mistress. I shall be with her almost immediately, and that her—her son is quite well."

"Mr. Tyrrel," he continued, as soon as the servant was out of hearing, "there is, I think, a liqueur stand on the sideboard in the large dining-room. Would you have the kindness to bring it me, unobserved—mind that—unobserved by any one?"

I did as he requested; and the instant I placed the liqueur frame before him, he seized the brandy *carafe*, and drank with fierce eagerness. "For goodness' sake," I exclaimed, "consider what you are about, Mr. Arbuthnot: you will make yourself ill."

"No, no," he answered, after finishing his draught. "It

seems scarcely stronger than water. But I—I am better now. It was a sudden spasm of the heart; that's all. The letter," he added, after a long and painful pause, during which he eyed me, I thought, with a kind of suspicion—"the letter you saw me open just now, comes from a relative, an aunt, who is ill, very ill, and wishes to see me instantly. You understand?"

I *did* understand, or at least I feared that I did too well. I, however, bowed acquiescence; and he presently rose from his chair, and strode about the apartment in great agitation, until his wife's bedroom bell rang. He then stopped suddenly short, shook himself, and looked anxiously at the reflection of his flushed and varying countenance in the magnificent chimney glass.

"I do not look, I think—or at least shall not, in a darkened room—odder, more out of the way—that is, more agitated—than one might, than one *must* appear, after hearing of the dangerous illness of—of—an aunt?"

"You look better, sir, than you did awhile since."

"Yes, yes; much better, much better. I am glad to hear you say so. That was my wife's bell. She is anxious, no doubt, to see me."

He left the apartment; was gone perhaps ten minutes; and when he returned, was a thought less nervous than before. I rose to go. "Give my respects," he said, "to the good rector; and as an especial favor," he added, with strong emphasis, "let me ask of you not to mention to a living soul that you saw me so unmanned as I was just now; that I swallowed brandy. It would appear weak, so strange, so ridiculous."

I promised not to do so, and almost immediately left the house, very painfully affected. His son was, I concluded, either dead or dying, and he was thus bewilderedly casting about for means of keeping the terrible, perhaps fatal tidings

from his wife. I afterwards heard that he left Elm Park in a postchaise, about two hours after I came away, unattended by a single servant!

He was gone three clear days only, at the end of which he returned with Mrs. Danby and—his son—in florid health, too, and one of the finest babies of its age—about nine weeks only—I had ever seen. Thus vanished the air-drawn Doubting Castle and Giant Despair which I had so hastily conjured up! The cause assigned by Mr. Arbuthnot for the agitation I had witnessed, was doubtless the true one; and yet, and the thought haunted me for months, years afterwards, he opened only *one* letter that morning, and had sent a message to his wife that the child was well!

Mrs. Danby remained at the Park till the little Robert was weaned, and was then dismissed very munificently rewarded. Year after year rolled away without bringing Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot any additional little ones, and no one, therefore, could feel surprised at the enthusiastic love of the delighted mother for her handsome, nobly-promising boy. But that which did astonish me, though no one else, for it seemed that I alone noticed it, was a strange defect of character which began to develop itself in Mr. Arbuthnot. He was positively jealous of his wife's affection for their own child! Many and many a time have I remarked, when he thought himself unobserved, an expression of intense pain flash from his fine, expressive eyes, at any more than usually fervent manifestation of the young mother's gushing love for her first and only born! It was altogether a mystery to me, and I as much as possible forbore to dwell upon the subject.

Nine years passed away without bringing any material change to the parties involved in this narrative, except those which time brings ordinarily in his train. Young Robert Arbuthnot was a healthy, tall, fine looking lad of

his age; and his great-grandpapa, the rector, though not suffering under any actual physical or mental infirmity, had reached a time of life when the announcement that the golden bowl is broken, or the silver cord is loosed, may indeed be quick and sudden, but scarcely unexpected. Things had gone well, too, with the nurse, Mrs. Danby, and her husband; well, at least, after a fashion. The speculative miller must have made good use of the gift of his wife for the care of little Arbuthnot, for he had built a genteel house near the mill, always rode a valuable horse, kept, it was said, a capital table; and all this, as it seemed, by his clever speculations in corn and flour, for the ordinary business of the mill was almost entirely neglected. He had no children of his own, but he had apparently taken, with much cordiality, to his step-son, a fine lad, now about eighteen years of age. This greatly grieved the boy's mother, who dreaded above all things that her son should contract the evil, dissolute habits of his father-in-law. Latterly, she had become extremely solicitous to procure the lad a permanent situation abroad, and this Mr. Arbuthnot had promised should be effected at the earliest opportunity.

Thus stood affairs on the 16th of October, 1846. Mr. Arbuthnot was temporarily absent in Ireland, where he possessed large property, and was making personal inquiries as to the extent of the potato rot, not long before announced. The morning's post had brought a letter to his wife, with the intelligence that he should reach home that very evening; and as the rectory was on the direct road to Elm Park, and her husband would be sure to pull up there, Mrs. Arbuthnot came with her son to pass the afternoon there, and in some slight degree anticipate her husband's arrival.

About three o'clock, a chief-clerk of one of the Taunton

banks rode up in a gig to the rectory, and asked to see the Rev. Mr. Townley, on pressing and important business. He was ushered into the library, where the rector and I were at the moment rather busily engaged. The clerk said he had been to Elm Park, but not finding either Mr. Arbuthnot or his lady there, he had thought that perhaps the Rev. Mr. Townley might be able to pronounce upon the genuineness of a cheque for £300, purporting to be drawn on the Taunton Bank by Mr. Arbuthnot, and which Danby the miller had obtained cash for at Bath. He further added, that the bank had refused payment, and detained the cheque, believing it to be a forgery.

"A forgery!" exclaimed the rector, after merely glancing at the document. "No question that it is, and a very clumsily executed one, too. Besides, Mr. Arbuthnot is not yet returned from Ireland."

This was sufficient; and the messenger, with many apologies for his intrusion, withdrew, and hastened back to Taunton. We were still talking over this sad affair, although some hours had elapsed since the clerk's departure—in fact, candles had been brought in, and we were every moment expecting Mr. Arbuthnot—when the sound of a horse at a hasty gallop was heard approaching, and presently the pale and haggard face of Danby shot by the window at which the rector and myself were standing. The gate-bell was rung almost immediately afterwards, and but a brief interval passed before "Mr. Danby" was announced to be in waiting. The servant had hardly gained the passage with leave to show him in, when the impatient visitor rushed rudely into the room in a state of great, and it seemed angry, excitement.

"What, sir, is the meaning of this ill-mannered intrusion?" demanded the rector sternly.

"You have pronounced the check I paid away at Bath

to be a forgery; and the officers are, I am told, already at my heels. Mr. Arbuthnot, unfortunately, is not at home, and I am come, therefore, to seek shelter with you."

"Shelter with me, sir!" exclaimed the indignant rector, moving, as he spoke, towards the bell. "Out of my house you shall go this instant."

The fellow placed his hand upon the reverend gentleman's arm, and looked with his bloodshot eyes keenly in his face.

"Don't!" said Danby; "don't, for the sake of yourself and yours! Don't! I warn you; or, if you like the phrase better, don't, for the sake of me and *mine*."

"Yours, fellow! Your wife, whom you have so long held in cruel bondage through her fears for her son, has at last shaken off that chain. James Harper sailed two days ago from Portsmouth for Bombay. I sent her the news two hours since."

"Ha! Is that indeed so?" cried Danby, with an irrepressible start of alarm. "Why, then—— But no matter: here, luckily, come Mrs. Arbuthnot *and her son*. All's right! She will, I know, stand bail for me, and, if need be, acknowledge the genuineness of her husband's cheque."

The fellow's insolence was becoming unbearable, and I was about to seize and thrust him forcibly from the apartment, when the sound of wheels was heard outside. "Hold! one moment," he cried, with fierce vehemence. "That is probably the officers: I must be brief, then, and to the purpose. Pray, madam, do not leave the room for your own sake: as for you, young sir, I *command* you to remain!"

"What! what does he mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Arbuthnot bewilderedly, and at the same time clasping her son—who gazed on Danby with kindled eyes, and angry boyish defiance—tightly to her side. Did the man's strange words

give form and significance to some dark, shadowy, indistinct doubt that had previously haunted her at times? I judged so. The rector appeared similarly confused and shaken, and had sunk nerveless and terrified upon a sofa.

"You guess dimly, I see, at what I have to say," resumed Danby, with a malignant sneer. "Well, hear it, then, once for all, and then, if you will, give me up to the officers. Some years ago," he continued, coldly and steadily—"some years ago, a woman, a nurse, was placed in charge of two infant children, both boys; one of these was her own; the other was the son of rich, proud parents. The woman's husband was a gay, jolly fellow, who much preferred spending money to earning it, and just then it happened that he was more than usually hard up. One afternoon, on visiting his wife, who had removed to a distance, he found that the rich man's child had sickened of the small-pox, and that there was no chance of its recovery. A letter containing the sad news was on a table, which he, the husband, took the liberty to open and read. After some reflection, suggested by what he had heard of the lady-mother's state of mind, he recopied the letter, for the sake of embodying in it a certain suggestion. That letter was duly posted, and the next day brought the rich man almost in a state of distraction; but his chief and mastering terror was lest the mother of the already dead infant should hear, in her then precarious state, of what had happened. The tidings, he was sure, would kill her. Seeing this, the cunning husband of the nurse suggested that, for the present, his—the cunning one's—child might be taken to the lady as her own, and that the truth could be revealed when she was strong enough to bear it. The rich man fell into the artful trap, and that which the husband of the nurse had speculated upon, came to pass even beyond his hopes. The lady grew to idolize her fancied child—she

has, fortunately, had no other—and now, I think, it would really kill her to part with him. The rich man could not find it in his heart to undeceive his wife—every year it became more difficult, more impossible to do so; and very generously, I must say, has he paid in purse for the forbearance of the nurse's husband. Well now, then, to sum up: the nurse was Mrs. Danby; the rich, weak husband, Mr. Arbuthnot; the substituted child, that handsome boy—*my son!*"

A wild scream from Mrs. Arbuthnot broke the dread silence which had accompanied this frightful revelation, echoed by an agonized cry, half tenderness, half rage, from her husband, who had entered the room unobserved, and now clasped her passionately in her arms. The carriage wheels we had heard were his. It was long before I could recall with calmness the tumult, terror, and confusion of that scene. Mr. Arbuthnot strove to bear his wife from the apartment, but she would not be forced away, and kept imploring with frenzied vehemence that Robert—that her boy should not be taken from her.

"I have no wish to do so—far from it," said Danby, with gleeful exultation. "Only folks must be reasonable, and not threaten their friends with the hulks"——

"Give him anything, anything!" broke in the unhappy lady. "O Robert! Robert!" she added, with a renewed burst of hysterical grief, "how could you deceive me so?"

"I have been punished, Agnes," he answered, in a husky, broken voice, "for my well intended but criminal weakness; cruelly punished by the ever-present consciousness that this discovery must one day or other be surely made. What do you want?" he after awhile added, with recovering firmness, addressing Danby.

"The acknowledgment of the little bit of paper in dispute, of course; and say a genuine one to the same amount."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Mrs. Arbuthnot, still wildly sobbing, and holding the terrified boy strained in her embrace, as if she feared he might be wrenched from her by force. "Anything—pay him anything!"

At this moment, chancing to look towards the door of the apartment, I saw that it was partially opened, and that Danby's wife was listening there. What might that mean? But what of hopeful meaning in such a case could it have?

"Be it so, love," said Arbuthnot soothingly. "Danby, call to-morrow at the Park. And now, begone at once."

"I was thinking," resumed the rascal, with swelling audacity, "that we might as well at the same time come to some permanent arrangement upon black and white. But never mind: I can always put the screw on; unless, indeed, you get tired of the young gentleman, and in that case, I doubt not he will prove a dutiful and affectionate son——Ah, devil! What do you here? Begone, or I'll murder you! Begone, do you hear!"

His wife had entered, and silently confronted him. "Your threats, evil man," replied the woman quietly, "have no terrors for me now. My son is beyond your reach. Oh, Mrs. Arbuthnot," she added, turning towards and addressing that lady, "believe not"——

Her husband sprang at her with the bound of a panther. "Silence! Go home, or I'll strangle"—— His own utterance was arrested by the fierce grasp of Mr. Arbuthnot, who seized him by the throat, and hurled him to the further end of the room. "Speak on, woman; and quick! quick! What have you to say?"

"That your son, dearest lady," she answered, throwing herself at Mrs. Arbuthnot's feet, "is as truly your own child as ever son born of woman!"

The shout of half-fearful triumph seems even now as I write to ring in my ears! I *felt* that the woman's words

were words of truth, but I could not see distinctly; the room whirled round, and the lights danced before my eyes, but I could hear through all the choking ecstasy of the mother, and the fury of the baffled felon.

"The letter," continued Mrs. Danby, "which my husband found and opened, would have informed you, sir, of the swiftly-approaching death of *my* child, and that yours had been carefully kept beyond the reach of contagion. The letter you received was written without my knowledge or consent. True it is that, terrified by my husband's threats, and in some measure reconciled to the wicked imposition by knowing that, after all, the right child would be in his right place, I afterwards lent myself to Danby's evil purposes. But I chiefly feared for my son, whom I fully believed he would not have scrupled to make away in revenge for my exposing his profitable fraud. I have sinned; I can hardly hope to be forgiven, but I have told the sacred truth."

All this was uttered by the repentant woman, but at the time it was almost wholly unheard by those most interested in the statement. They only comprehended that they were saved—that the child was theirs in very truth. Great, abundant, but, for the moment, bewildering joy! Mr. Arbuthnot—his beautiful young wife—her own true boy (how could she for a moment have doubted that he was her own true boy!—you might have read that thought through all her tears, quickly as they fell)—the aged and half-stunned rector, whilst yet Mrs. Danby was speaking, were exclaiming, sobbing in each other's arms, aye, and praising God too, with broken voices and incoherent words it may be, but certainly with fervent, pious, grateful hearts.

When we had time to look about us, it was found that the felon had disappeared—escaped. It was well, perhaps, that he had; better, that he has not been heard of since.

# The Betrothal.

FRANCES SEYMOUR had been left an orphan and an heiress very early in life. Her mother had died in giving birth to a second child, which did not survive its parent, so that Frances had neither brother nor sister; and her father, an officer of rank and merit, was killed at Waterloo. When this sad news reached England, the child was spending her vacation with Mrs. Wentworth, a sister of Mrs. Seymour, and henceforth this lady's house became her home; partly, because there was no other relative to claim her, and partly, because amongst Colonel Seymour's papers, a letter was found, addressed to Mrs. Wentworth, requesting that, if he fell in the impending conflict, she would take charge of his daughter. In making this request, it is probable that Colonel Seymour was more influenced by necessity than choice; Mrs. Wentworth being a gay woman of the world, who was not likely to bestow much thought or care upon her niece, whom she received under her roof without unwillingness, but without affection. Had Frances been poor, she would have felt her a burden; but as she was rich, there was some éclat and no inconveni-

ence in undertaking the office of her guardian and chaperon —the rather as she had no daughters of her own with whom Frances's beauty or wealth could interfere; for as the young heiress grew into womanhood, the charms of her person were quite remarkable enough to have excited the jealousy of her cousins, if she had any; or to make her own fortune, if she had not possessed one already. She was, moreover, extremely accomplished, good-tempered, cheerful, and altogether what is called a very nice girl; but of course she had her fault, like other people: she was too fond of admiration—a fault that had been very much encouraged at the school where she had been educated; beauty and wealth, especially when combined, being generally extremely popular at such establishments. As long, however, as her admirers were only romantic schoolfellows and calculating school-mistresses, there was not much harm done; but the period now approached in which there would be more scope for the exercise of this passion, and more danger in its indulgence. Frances had reached the age of seventeen, and was about to make her début in the world of fashion—an event to which, certain as she was of making numerous conquests, she looked forward with great delight.

Whilst engaged in preparations for these anticipated triumphs, Mrs. Wentworth said to her one day: "Now that you are coming out, Frances, I think it is my duty to communicate to you a wish of your father's, expressed in the letter which was found after his death. It is a wish regarding your choice of a husband."

"Dear me, aunt, how very odd!" exclaimed Frances.

"It is rather odd," returned Mrs. Wentworth; "and, to be candid, I don't think it is very wise; for schemes of this sort seldom or never turn out well."

"Scheme! What scheme is it?" asked Frances, with no little curiosity.

"Why, you must know," answered her aunt, "that your father had a very intimate friend, to whom he was as much attached all his life as if he had been his brother."

"You mean Sir Richard Elliott. I remember seeing him and his son at Otterby, when I was a little girl; and I often heard papa speak of him afterwards."

"Well, when young Elliott got his commission, your papa, in compliance with Sir Richard's request, used his interest to have him appointed to his own regiment, in order that he might keep him under his eye. By this means, he became intimately acquainted with the young man's character, and, I suppose, as much attached to him as to his father."

"And the scheme is, that I should marry him, I suppose?"

"Provided you are both so disposed, not otherwise; there is to be no compulsion in the case."

"It is a scheme that will never be realized," said Frances; "for, of all things, I should dislike a marriage that had been planned in that way. The very idea of standing in such an awkward relation to a man would make me hate him."

"That's why I think all such schemes better let alone," returned Mrs. Wentworth; "but as your father desires that I will put you in possession of his wishes before you go into the world, I have no choice but to do it."

"It does not appear, however, that this Mr. Elliott is very anxious about the matter, since he has never taken the trouble of coming to see me. Perhaps he does not know of the scheme?"

"Oh yes, he does; but, in the first place, he is abroad with his regiment; and in the second, he abstains upon principle from seeking to make your acquaintance. So Sir Richard told me, when I met him last year at Lady Grant-

ley's fête. He said that his son's heart was yet perfectly free, but that he did not think it right to throw himself in your way, or endeavor to engage your affections, till you had an opportunity of seeing something of the world. The old gentleman had a great desire to see you himself; and he would have called, but he was only passing through London on his way to some German baths, and he was to start the next morning."

"And what sort of a person is this Mr. Elliott?"

"I really don't know, except that his father praised him to the skies. He's Major Elliott now, and must be about eight-and-twenty."

"And is he the eldest son?"

"He's the eldest son, and will be Sir Henry—I think that's his name—by and by. But he's not rich; quite the contrary, he's very poor for a baronet; and I incline to think that that is one of the reasons that influenced your father. Being so fond of the Elliotts, he wished to repair, in some degree, the dilapidation of their fortunes by yours."

"So that I shall have the agreeable consciousness of being married purely for my money. I am afraid poor dear papa's scheme will fail; and I wish, aunt, you had never told me of it."

"That was not left to my discretion; if it had been, I should not have told you of it, I assure you."

"Well, I can only hope that I shall never see Major Elliott; and if he ever proposes to come, aunt, pray do me the favor to assure him, from me, that it will not be of the smallest use."

"That would be foolish till you've seen him. You may like him."

"Never: I could not like a man whom I met under such circumstances, if he were an angel."

Thus, with a heart steeled against Major Elliott and his

attractions, whatever they might be, Frances Seymour made her début; and, however brilliant had been her anticipations of success, she had the satisfaction of finding them fully realized. She was the belle of the season—admired, courted, and envied; and by the end of it, she had refused at least half-a-dozen proposals. As she was perfectly independent, she resolved to enjoy a longer lease of her liberty, before she put it in the power of any man to control her inclinations.

Shortly after the termination of the season, some family affairs called Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth to St. Petersburg; and as it was not convenient that Frances should accompany them, they arranged that she should spend the interval in visiting some families of their own connexion residing in the country, who promised to take due charge of her.

The first of these, by name Dunbar, were worthy people enough, but, unfortunately for Frances, desperately dull; and the few neighbors they had happened to be as dull as themselves. There were neither balls nor routs to keep up the spirits of the London belle; and a tiresome drive of six or eight miles to an equally tiresome dinner party, was but a poor substitute for the gaieties which the late season had given her a taste for.

Frances was not without resources. She was a fine musician, and played and sang admirably; but she liked to be told that she did so. At Dunbar House, nobody cared for music, nobody listened to her, and her most *recherchées toilettes* delighted nobody but her maid. She was *aux abois*, as the French say, and had made some progress in the concoction of a scheme to get away, when an improvement took place in her position, from the arrival of young Vincent Dunbar, the only son of the family. He was a lieutenant in a regiment of infantry that had lately returned from the colonies, and had come, as in duty bound, to waste

ten days or a fortnight of his three months' leave in the dull home of his ancestors. As he was an extremely handsome, fashionable-looking youth, Frances, when she went down to dinner, felt quite revived by the sight of him. Here was something to dress for, and something to sing to; and although the young lieutenant's conversation was not a whit above the usual standard of his class, it appeared lively and witty when compared with that of his parents. His small colonial experiences were more interesting than Mrs. Dunbar's domestic ones; and his account of a tiger hunt more exciting than his father's history of the run he had had after a fox. Frances was an equally welcome resource to him. Here was an opportunity, quite unexpected, of displaying his most fashionable ties and most splendid waistcoats; here was a listener for his best stories, and one who did not repay him in kind, as his father did; and here were a pair of bright eyes that always looked brighter at his approach; and a pair of pretty lips, that pouted when he talked of going away to fulfil an engagement he had made to meet some friends at Brighton.

As was to be expected, under circumstances so propitious, the young man fell in love—as much in love as he could be with anybody but himself; whilst his parents did not neglect to hint that he could not do better than prosecute a suit which the young lady's evident partiality justified. Pleased with the prospect of their son's making so good a match, they even ventured one day a dull jest on the subject in the presence of Frances—a jest which, heavy as it was, aroused her to reflection. Flirting with a man, and angling for his admiration, is one thing; loving and marrying him, is another. For the first, Vincent Dunbar answered exceedingly well; but for the second, he was wholly unfit. In spite of her little weaknesses, Frances had too much sense not to see that the young lieutenant was an empty-headed

coxcomb, and not at all the man with whom she hoped to spend her years of discretion—when arrived at them—after an ample enjoyment of the delights that youth, beauty, and wealth are calculated to procure their possessor. Her eyes were opened, in short; and the ordinary effect of this sort of awakening from an unworthy *penchant*—for attachment it could not be called—ensued; the temporary liking changed into aversion, and the attentions that had flattered her before became hateful. In accordance with this new state of her feelings, she resolved to alter her behavior, in order to dissipate as quickly as possible the erroneous impression of the family; whilst, at the same time, she privately made arrangements for cutting short her visit, and anticipating the period of her removal to the house of Mrs. Gaskoin, betwixt whom and the Dunbars the interval of her friends' absence in Russia was to be divided. In spite of her stratagem, however, she did not escape what she apprehended. Vincent's leave had nearly expired too; and when the moment approached that was to separate them, he seized an opportunity of making his proposals.

There is scarcely a woman to be met with in society, who does not know, from experience, what a painful thing it is to crush the hopes of a man who is paying her the high compliment of wishing to place the happiness of his life in her keeping; and when to this source of embarrassment is added the consciousness of having culpably raised expectations that she shrinks from realizing, the situation becomes doubly distressing. On the present occasion, agitated, ashamed, and confused, Frances, instead of honestly avowing her fault, which would have been the safest thing to do, had recourse to a subterfuge; she answered, that she had been betrothed by her father to the son of his dearest friend, and that she was not free to form any other engagement. Of course, Vincent pleaded that such a contract

could not be binding on her; but as, whilst she declared her determination to adhere to it, she forbore to add, that were she at liberty his position would not be improved, the young man and his family remained under the persuasion that this premature engagement was the only bar to his happiness; and with this impression, which she allowed him to retain, because it spared him and herself pain, he returned to his regiment, whilst she, as speedily as she could, decamped to her next quarters, armed with a thousand good resolutions never again to bring herself into such an unpleasant dilemma.

Mrs. Gaskoin's was a different sort of a house to the Dunbars'. It was not gay, for the place was retired, and Mrs. Gaskoin being in ill health, they saw little company; but they were young, cheerful, and accomplished people, and in their society Frances soon forgot the vexations she had left behind her. She even ceased to miss the admiration she was accustomed to; what was amiable and good in her character—and there was much—regained the ascendant; her host and hostess congratulated themselves on having so agreeable an inmate as much as she did herself on the judicious move she had made, till her equanimity was disturbed by learning that Mr. Gaskoin was expecting a visitor, and that this visitor was his old friend and brother officer, Major Elliott, the person of all others, Vincent Dunbar excepted, she had the greatest desire to avoid.

"I cannot express how much I should dislike meeting him," she said to Mrs. Gaskoin, to whom she thought it better to explain how she was situated. "You must allow me to keep my room whilst he is here."

"If you are determined not to see him, I think you had better go back to the Dunbars for a little while," answered the hostess; "but I really think you should stay, and let things take their course. If your aversion continues, you

need not marry him; but my husband tells me he's charming; and in point of character, I know no one whom he estimates so highly."

But Frances objected, that she should feel so embarrassed and awkward.

"In short, you apprehend that you will appear to a great disadvantage," said Mrs. Gaskoin. "That is possible, certainly; but as Major Elliott is only coming for a day or two, I think we might obviate that difficulty, by introducing you as my husband's niece, Fanny Gaskoin. What do you say? You can declare yourself whenever you please, or keep the secret till he goes, if you prefer it."

Frances said she should like it very much; the scheme would afford them a great deal of amusement, and any expedient was preferable to going back to Dunbar House. Neither, as regarded themselves, was it at all difficult of execution, since they always addressed her as Fanny or Frances; the danger was with the servants, who, however cautioned to call the visitor by no other name than Miss Fanny, might inadvertently betray the secret. Still, if they did, a few blushes and a hearty laugh were likely to be the only consequences of the disclosure; so the little plot was duly framed, and successfully executed; Major Elliott not entertaining the most remote suspicion that this beautiful, fascinating Fanny Gaskoin was his own *fiancée*.

Whether they might have fallen in love with each other had they met under more prosaic circumstances, there is no saying. As it was, they did so almost at first sight. It is needless to say, that Major Elliott extended his visit beyond the day or two he had engaged for; and when Mr. and Mrs. Gaskoin saw how matters were going, they recommended an immediate avowal of the little deception that had been practised, lest some ill-timed visitor should inopportunely let out the secret, which had already been

endangered more than once by the forgetfulness of the servants; but Frances wished to prolong their diversion till she should find some happy moment for the *dénouement*; added to which, she had an extreme curiosity to know how Major Elliott intended to release himself from the engagement formed by Colonel Seymour, in which he had tacitly, if not avowedly, acquiesced. It was certainly very flattering that her charms had proved sufficiently powerful to make him forget it; but that he should have yielded to the temptation without the slightest appearance of a struggle, did somewhat surprise her, as indeed, from their knowledge of his character, it did Mr. and Mrs. Gaskoin. Not that they would have expected him to adhere to the contract, if doing so proved repugnant either to himself or the young lady; but under all the circumstances of the case, they would have thought his conduct less open to exception, if he had deferred entering into any other engagement till he had seen Miss Seymour. It was true, that he had not yet offered his hand to his friend Gaskoin's charming niece; but neither she, nor any one else, entertained a doubt of his intention to do so; and Frances never found herself alone with him, that her heart did not beat high with the expectation of what might be coming.

The progress of love affairs is no measure of time: where the *attrait*, or magnetic *rapport* (for perhaps magnetism has something to do with the mystery), is very strong, one couple will make as much way in a fortnight as another will do in a year. In the present instance, Major Elliott's proclivity to fall in love with Frances may have been aided by his persuasion that she was the niece of his friend. Be that as it may, on the thirteenth day of his visit, Major Elliott invited his host to join him in a walk, in the course of which he avowed his intention of offering his hand to Miss Gaskoin, provided her family were not likely to make any

serious objection to the match. "My reason for mentioning the subject so early is," said he, "that, in the first place, I cannot prolong my visit; I have already broken two engagements, and now, however unwillingly, I must be off; and, in the second place, I felt myself bound to mention the subject to you before speaking to Miss Gaskoin, because you know how I am situated in regard to money-matters; and that I cannot, unfortunately, make such a settlement as may be expected by her friends."

"I don't think that will be any obstacle to your wishes," answered Mr. Gaskoin, with an arch smile. "If you can find Fanny in the humor, I'll undertake to answer for all the rest. As for her fortune, she'll have something, at all events—but that is a subject, I suppose, you are too much in love to discuss."

"It is one there is no use in discussing till I am accepted," returned Major Elliott; "and I confess that is a point I am too anxious about to think of any other."

"Prepare yourself," said Mrs. Gaskoin to Frances; "Major Elliott has declared himself to my husband, and will doubtless take an opportunity of speaking to you in the course of the evening. Of course now the truth must be disclosed, and I've no doubt it will be a very agreeable surprise to him."

When the tea-things were removed, and Frances, as usual, was seated at the pianoforte, and Major Elliott, as usual, turning over the leaves of her music-book, she almost lost her breath with agitation when the gentle closing of a door aroused her to the fact that they were alone. Mr. and Mrs. Gaskoin had quietly slipped out of the room; and conscious that the critical moment was come, she was making a nervous attempt to follow them, when a hand was laid on hers, and —— But it is quite needless to enter into the particulars; such scenes do not bear relating. Major

Elliott said something, and looked a thousand things! Frances blushed and smiled, and then she wept, avowing that her tears were tears of joy; and so engrossed was she with the happiness of the moment, that she had actually forgotten the false colors under which she was appearing, till her lover said: "I have already, my dear Fanny, spoken on the subject to your uncle."

"Now, then, for the *dénouement!*" thought Frances; but she had formed a little scheme for bringing this about, which she forthwith proceeded to put into execution.

"But, dear Henry," she said, as seated on the sofa hand in hand, they dilated on their present happiness and future plans—"dear Henry, there is one thing that has rather perplexed me, and does perplex me still, a little—do you know, I have been told you were engaged?"

"Indeed! Who told you that?"

"Well, I don't know; but I'm sure I heard it. It was said that you were engaged to Miss Seymour—the Miss Seymour, that lives with Mrs. Wentworth——"

"Do you know her?" inquired Major Elliott, interrupting her.

"Yes, I do—a little."

"Only a little?"

"Well, perhaps, I may say I know her pretty well. Indeed, to confess the truth, I'm rather intimate with her."

"That is extremely fortunate," returned Major Elliott.

"Then you don't deny the engagement?" said Frances.

"Colonel Seymour, who was my father's friend and mine, very kindly expressed a wish, before he died, that, provided there was no objection on either side, his daughter and I should be married; but you see, my dearest Fanny, as there happens to be an objection on both sides, the scheme, however well meant, is defeated."

"On both sides!" reiterated Frances with surprise.

"Yes; on both sides," answered he smiling.

"But how do you know that, when you've never seen Miss Seymour—as least I thought you never had?"

"Neither have I; but I happen to know that she has not the slightest intention of taking me for her husband."

"Oh," said Frances, laughing at the recollection of her own violent antipathy to this irresistible man, who, after all, had taken her heart by storm—"I suppose you have somehow heard that she disliked the idea of being trammelled by an engagement to a person she never saw, and whom she had made up her mind she could not love; but remember, Henry, she has never seen you. How do you know that she might not have fallen in love with you at first sight?—as somebody else did," she added, playfully.

"Because, my dear little girl, she happens to be in love already. She did not wait to see me, but wisely gave away her heart when she met a man that pleased her."

"But you're mistaken," answered Frances, beginning to feel alarmed; "you are indeed! I know Frances Seymour has no attachment. I know that till she saw you—I mean that—I am certain she has no attachment, nor ever had any."

"Perhaps you are not altogether in her confidence."

"Oh, yes, I am indeed."

Major Elliott shook his head, and smiled significantly. "Rely on it," he said, "that what I tell you is the fact; bnt you have probably not seen Miss Seymour very lately, which would sufficiently account for your ignorance of her secret. I am told that she is extremely handsome and charming, and that she sings divinely."

Five minutes earlier, Frances would have been delighted with this testimony to her attractions; and would have been ready with a repartee about the loss he would sustain in relinquishing so many perfections for her sake; but now

her heart was growing faint with terror, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Thoughts that would fill pages darted through her brain like lightning—dreadful possibilities, that she had never foreseen nor thought of.

Vincent Dunbar's regiment had been in India; she knew it was one of the *seventies;* but she had either never heard the exact number, or she had not sufficiently attended to the subject to know which it was. Major Elliott's regiment had also been in India; and it was the 76th. Suppose it were the same, and that the two officers were acquainted—and suppose they had met since Vincent's departure from Dunbar House! The young man had occasionally spoken to her of his brother-officers; she remembered Poole, and Wainright, and Carter; the name of Elliott he had certainly not mentioned; but it was naturally of his own friends and companions he spoke, not of the field-officers. Then, when she told him that she had been betrothed by her father, she had not said to whom; but might he not, by some unlucky chance, have found that out? And might not an explanation have ensued!

Could Major Elliott have distinctly discovered the expression of her features, he would have seen that it was something more than perplexity that kept her silent; but the light fell obscurely on the seat they occupied, and he suspected nothing but that she was puzzled and surprised.

"I see you are very curious to learn the secret," he said, "and if it were my own, you should not pine in ignorance, I assure you; but as it is a young lady's, I am bound to keep it till she chooses to disclose it herself. However, I hope your curiosity will soon be satisfied, for I have ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth are to be in England almost immediately—they have been some time on the continent—and then we shall come to a general understanding. In the meantime, my dearest Fanny——"

But Frances, unable longer to control her agitation, took advantage of a slight noise in the hall, to say that Mr. and Mrs. Gaskoin were coming; and before he had time to finish his sentence, she started to her feet, and rushed out of the room.

On the other side of the hall was Mrs. Gaskoin's boudoir, where she and her husband were sitting over the fire, awaiting the result of the *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room.

"Well?" said they, rising as the door opened and a pale face looked in. "Is it all settled?"

"Ask me nothing now, I beseech you!" said Frances. "I'm going to my room; tell Major Elliott I am not well; say I'm agitated—anything you like; but remember he still thinks me Fanny Gaskoin——"

"But, my dear girl, I cannot permit that deception to be carried any further; it has lasted too long already," said Mr. Gaskoin.

"Only to-night!" said Frances.

"It is not fair to Major Elliott," urged Mrs. Gaskoin.

"Only to-night! only to-night!" reiterated Frances. "There! he's coming; I hear his step in the hall! Let me out this way!" and so saying, she darted out of a door that led to the backstairs, and disappeared.

"She has refused him!" said Mrs. Gaskoin. "I confess I am amazed."

But Major Elliott met them with a smiling face. "What has become of Frances?" said he.

"She rushed in to us in a state of violent agitation, and begged we would tell you that she is not well, and is gone to her room. I'm afraid the result of your interview has not been what we expected."

"On the contrary," returned Major Elliott, "you must both congratulate me on my good-fortune."

"Silly girl!" said Mr. Gaskoin, shaking his friend heartily by the hand. "I see what it is: she is nervous about a little deception we have been practising on you."

"A deception!"

"Why, you see, my dear fellow, when I told Frances that you were coming here, she objected to meeting you——"

"Indeed! On what account?"

"You have never suspected anything?" said Mr. Gaskoin, scarcely repressing his laughter.

"Suspected anything? No."

"It has never by chance occurred to you that this bewitching niece of mine is——"

"Is what?"

"Your betrothed lady, for example, Frances Seymour?"

Major Elliott's cheeks and lips turned several shades paler; but the candles were not lighted, and his friends did not remark the change.

"Frances Seymour!" he echoed.

"That is the precise state of the case, I assure you;" and then Mr. Gaskoin proceeded to explain how the deception came to be practised. "I gave into it," he said, "though I do not like jests of that sort, because I thought, as my wife did, that you were much more likely to take a fancy to each other, if you did not know who she was, than if you met under all the embarrassment of such an awkward relation."

During this little discourse, Major Elliott had time to recover from the shock; and being a man of resolute calmness and great self-possession—which qualities, by the way, formed a considerable element in his attractions—the remainder of the evening was passed without any circumstance calculated to awaken the suspicions of his host and

hostess, further than that a certain gravity of tone and manner, when they spoke of Frances, led them to apprehend that he was not altogether pleased with the jest that had been practised.

"We ought to have told him the moment we saw that he was pleased with her; but, foolish child, she would not let us," said Mr. Gaskoin to his wife.

"She must make her peace with him to-morrow," returned the lady; but, alas! when they came down to breakfast on the following morning, Major Elliott was gone, having left a few lines to excuse his sudden departure, which, he said, he had only anticipated by a few hours, as, in any case, he must have left them that afternoon.

By the same morning's post there arrived a letter from Vincent Dunbar, addressed to Miss Seymour. Its contents were as follow:—

"My dearest, dearest Frances—I should have written to you ten days ago to tell you the joyful news—you little guess what—but that I had applied for an extension of leave *on urgent private affairs*, and expected every hour to get it. But they have refused me, be hanged to them! So I write to you, my darling, to tell you that it's all right—I mean between you and me. I'm not a very good hand at an explanation on paper, my education in the art of composition having been somewhat neglected; but you must know that old Elliott, whom your dad wanted you to marry, is our senior major. Well, when I came down here to meet Poole, as I had promised—his governor keeps hounds, you know; a capital pack, too,—I was as dull as dish-water; I was, I assure you; and whenever there was nothing going on, I used to take out the verses you wrote, and the music you copied for me, to look at; and one day, who should come in but Elliott, who was staying with his governor on the West Cliff, where the old gentleman has

taken a house. Well, you know, I told you what a mad-cap fellow Poole is; and what should he do, but tell Elliott that I was going stark mad for a girl that couldn't have me because her dad had engaged her to somebody else; and then he showed him the music that was lying on the table with your name on it. So you may guess how Elliott stared, and all the questions he asked me about you, and about our acquaintance and our love-making, and all the rest of it. And, of course, I told him the truth, and showed him the dear lock of hair you gave me; and the little notes you wrote me the week I ran up to London; for Elliott's an honorable fellow, and I knew it was all right. And it is all right, my darling; for he says he wouldn't stand in the way of our happiness for the world, or marry a woman whose affections were not all his own. And he'll speak to your aunt for us, and get it all settled as soon as she comes back," &c. &c.

The paper dropped from poor Frances Seymour's hands. She comprehended enough of Major Elliott's character to see that all was over. But for the unfortunate jest they had practised on him, an explanation would necessarily have ensued the moment he mentioned Vincent's name to her; but that unlucky deception had complicated the mischief beyond repair. It was now too late to tell him that she did not love Vincent; he would only think her false or fickle. A woman who could act as she had done, or as she appeared to have done, was no wife for Henry Elliott.

There is no saying, but it is just possible, that an entire confidence placed in Mr. Gaskoin might have led to a happier issue; but her own conviction that her position was irrecoverable, her hopelessness and her pride, closed her lips. Her friends saw that there was something wrong; and when a few lines from Major Elliott announced his immediate departure for Paris, they concluded that some

strange mystery had divided the lovers, and clouded the hopeful future that for a short period had promised so brightly.

Vincent Dunbar was not a man to break his heart at the disappointment, which it is needless to say awaited him. Long years afterwards, when Sir Henry Elliott was not only married, but had daughters coming out in the world, he, one day at a dinner-party, sat next a pale-faced, middle-aged lady, whose still beautiful features, combined with the quiet, almost grave elegance of her toilet, had already attracted his attention in the drawing-room. It was a countenance of perfect serenity; but no observing eye could look at it without feeling that that was a serenity not born of joy, but of sadness—a calm that had succeeded a storm—a peace won by a great battle. Sir Henry felt pleased when he saw that the fortunes of the dinner-table had placed him beside this lady, and they had not been long seated before he took an opportunity of addressing her. Her eyelids fell as she turned to answer him; but there was a sweet mournful smile on her lip—a smile that awoke strange recollections, and made his heart for a moment stand still. For some minutes he did not speak again, nor she either; when he did, it was to ask her, in a low gentle voice, to take wine with him. The lady's hand shook visibly as she raised her glass; but, after a short interval, the surprise and the pang passed away, and they conversed calmly on general subjects, like other people in society.

When Sir Henry returned to the drawing-room, the pale-faced lady was gone; and a few days afterwards, the *Morning Post* announced among its departures that Miss Seymour had left London for the continent.

# Love Passages in the Life of Perron the Breton.

We propose in this paper to describe the courtship and the marriage of M. Perron; and in so doing shall adopt, as nearly as possible, his somewhat eccentric but highly graphic style. Indeed my host at the chateau "Eunn toul enn Douar" was, in all respects, an extraordinary man; and having been placed in extraordinary circumstances, subject to the tone and usages of a foreign country, I promised myself both interest and amusement in thus partaking his confidence, in neither of which was I disappointed.

I had been prepossessed with Madame the Countess of Croan at our first interview, but that prepossession soon increased to admiration as I became acquainted with her various accomplishments and cultivated mind. Beauty and grace of person; simplicity, accompanied with the highest polish of manners, combined to fascinate; while her tenderness and devotion towards her husband were as inexplicable as the contrast between them was great.

On the second night after my arrival, madame finished

the evening at the piano. The piece with which she concluded was the touching and sentimental ballad of "Penherez à Keroulas," narrating the melancholy fate of the Heiress of Keroulas.

She then rose and retired. The appropriate plaintiveness of the air, and the delicious blending of the voices (for madame had been admirably accompanied by her husband) lingered in my ear; but I could not banish the idea that such sweet perfection had been produced by an angel and a satyr. My reverie was interrupted by a loud laugh from M. Perron.

"Oh, I see!" cried he, good-humoredly, "I divine your thoughts. Vulcan and Venus. Is it not so?"

I was shocked and confused at thus having my secret thoughts laid bare, nor had I tact enough to conceal my feelings.

"Nay, do not attempt an apology," he continued; "it will spoil all. I have been an object of hatred, envy, fear, and ridicule by turns, for nearly twenty years, on this very point, and am not to be startled by a natural act of wonder to-day. You are merely surprised that my wife, who is so handsome and accomplished, should be married to me; that is, should love such a monster as myself! Believe me, there is no offence. You do not say it, and you could not help thinking thus. But come, draw to the fire, and over our nightcap—a glass of punch *à la citron*—I will recount to you what every one else knows, for there never was one act in my life I would desire to conceal. I have in my own experience exemplified that mental is more powerful than physical beauty; that lasting affection is based upon esteem: and that, though loveliness is captivating to the unaccustomed eye, as ugliness is repugnant, yet in the established relations, truth, virtue, and sincerity, secure the prize, and produce a more enduring sympathy."

Fresh logs were now thrown on the ample hearth, and broad flames shot up from the ardent *braise;* the black oak floor *frotté*'d with *cirage noir*, gleamed with the flood of light like a mirror, reflecting in rich mosaic the bright-hued grotesque images of the tapestry, the snowy tusks of mighty boars, and antlered heads of "lordly" stags, that lined this *halle de chasse.* Meanwhile, the wind without moaned through the ancient trees of the adjacent forest, bringing fitfully the roar of the mountain falls that emptied themselves into the lake, mingled with the dull tolling of the convent bell, summoning the holy fathers from "cell monastic" to watch and prey through the bitter night, in the cold, dim aisles of St. Philibert. We drew more closely to the genial warmth; and doubly grateful was the reeking punch, fragrant with limes, which, as my host crushed them into the liquor, sent up a cloudy incense sacred to hospitality and good fellowship!

M. Perron commenced his narrative.

"My wife, the Countess de Croan," said he, "was heiress of one of the most noble and ancient houses in Basse Bretagne. This, however, mattered little to me; so that honor keep pace with the blood within one's veins, I hold it to be sufficient. I have seen too much of musty monuments whose heraldic emblazonry no one cares to decipher—half-starved nobles, whom nobody cares to know, and denuded barons, tottering about in revolutionary rags—to convince me that grandeur is conventional, that there are two nobilities, that of the soul and that of the peerage (the blending of the two being perfection); and which is the most to be prized. Nor is this a revolutionary, but a moral maxim with me. However, madame was none the worse, even in my estimation, for being a countess. Our first meeting was remarkable; we were mutually struck with each other, but our feelings were totally different.

She revolted at my ugliness; and I was fascinated with her beauty. I had been of service to her family, by assisting them with such legal information as would enable them to recover a small remnant of their estates, which upon that occasion was the object of my visit. This being the first time of my seeing their chateau, I paused to admire the lofty terrace with massive balustrades, which you may have frequently observed in Brittany, commanding a varied and noble prospect, when my attention was attracted by a sweet, melodious voice, singing wildly a verse of some old legend of the country; and at the same moment a figure burst from a clump of evergreens at the opposite end of the garden, light as a fairy, and followed by an Italian grey-hound, whose playful evolutions and buoyant grace it fully equalled, nay, surpassed. Clear peals of laughter—the echoes of youthful spirits, untouched by the world's troubles—gave way to a second stanza; and this to the gathering of flowers from the parterre, with which she filled her lap.

"This was the heiress of the house, a young girl of seventeen years, a pure creature of unvarying delight; and then, how beautiful! Her form was slight, but soft with the sweet proportions of early womanhood; a sparkling complexion; forehead high, and white as marble; face oval, so suited to sweetness of expression, with delicately pencilled brow; and eyes black, and liquid as the stag's; her lovely countenance shaded by hair as fine as silk and black as night, which streamed in the wind, dancing when she danced, or falling in flaky curls upon her shoulders. Altogether, her beauty was of that cast which may be said to be characteristic of no country, but moulded in the perfection of nature and nurtured by a 'fresh heart.' This fair creature ascended the terrace, and, occupied with her flowers, advanced within a few yards of the spot where

I stood without perceiving me; then suddenly looking up, and dismayed, either from the fixedness of my gaze or my uncouth appearance, so repugnant to her own charming associations, or both, she dropped her eyes, turned hastily round, and instead of passing me, as appeared to be her first intention, she retreated with timid precipitation. I gazed after her, and involuntarily ejaculated, 'You have met your fate!'

"On my part, I was overwhelmed with admiration of so high a character, that it truly deserved the appellation of *love* at first sight. This was the more extraordinary, as I was accustomed to act in all grave matters with reason and reflection, and had only that very day made my determination to live a bachelor, in despair at ever finding a sympathy in so peculiar a person as I desired. I said to myself again and again, 'You have met your fate!' I had but one anxiety, that, in the first flush of the heart, she should have formed a previous attachment. Had it been so, I would have renounced my passion. A man of spirit, animated with a strong affection, can always inspire a reciprocal feeling, or at least something beyond indifference, save where there has been a prior passion, in which case his task is humiliating indeed. Happily the result did not place me in so painful a predicament, for her youthful affections were untouched. The Countess's family were, as I have said, poor—the Revolution had swallowed their vast estate; my property and rising fame were advantages too great to be rejected by her parents, but the repugnance of the young lady seemed to be insurmountable. I had become so fascinated and entangled that I at once formed my plan, and determined that my first step should be to gain a power over her, for I dreaded lest some more fortunate rival should interpose and snatch her from me. Hitherto I had piqued myself on my rough exterior, and was proud of a

power of intellect that raised me, notwithstanding these personal disqualifications, to a level with the first of my fellow-men; yet I had no vanity. But now that I felt the disadvantage I had to contend against, I cursed the bitterness of my fate, and rude as you see me, I watered my pillow with my tears. Though I had no difficulty in gaining the consent of her parents, it required all their influence to induce her to receive my visits; and when she found that she had nothing to hope for from them, and that, in fact, she was in a state of siege, she requested a private interview with me. Never shall I forget her as she stood before me, her beauty bursting into womanhood, taste in every action, timidly contending with resolution in her manner, and maiden delicacy and apprehension her sole protector! In vain I admitted the selfishness of my passion, the unmanly use I was making of circumstances, the almost unnatural contrast between us. She advanced towards me and threw herself on her knees, and bursting into a passionate flood of tears, she implored in terms of childish eloquence that I would have compassion on her. I was deeply moved, my tears exceeded hers; I made every effort to master my passion, but it increased upon me with every struggle. Her appeal was in vain.

"It was now my turn to sue, and I pleaded my suit with all the eloquence that affection could suggest; yet her repugnance remained unconquered; and at length rising from her knees, with an effort she collected all her energies, and coldly said,—

"'You have the power—my parents' power over me: you will take me as a sacrifice, but you will repent it!'

"So saying, she left the apartment without waiting my reply.

"Throughout this interview she had not once looked upon me; her very soul was full of aversion towards me.

My state of mind may be imagined; I could not but pity the victim, so young, so fair! She pleaded for more than life, but I have an iron will. My fate was irrevocably bound up in hers; to renounce her, to hear that she had become another's, would have been despair; the very apprehension shook my frame with horror, and brought down drops of agony upon my brow. I felt it impossible to live without her: death appeared a trifling thing in comparison. My mind being made up, I sat down to take a calm view of my position in all its relations. It was a fair garden, full of pitfalls. I at length fixed upon a line of conduct, from the spirit of which I never afterwards deviated, and which, in the end, conducted me to success; for what can resist passion and reason combined?

"Having resolved upon my course, I hastened our marriage forward. The ceremony took place; and at that part of it where the lady's consent is expressed, she looked at me, for the first time since I had declared my intentions, with an expression so imploring, so appealing to my compassion, that it required the utmost fortitude to maintain my firmness. After a short pause, seeing I appeared unmoved, she turned from me, and seemed to have taken a sudden resolution, as though having made a last effort, she had decided upon her fate.

"After the ceremony she attempted to take a tranquil, nay, cold leave of her parents; but nature and youth were too strong for her; she burst into tears, and, folding them in her arms, said, 'I forgive you; but, oh, how you will be wrung with remorse for this!'

"We took our seats in the carriage alone; the feeling of loathing which betrayed itself in her beautiful features, after a while subsided into icy coldness. Her manner, coupled with her conduct to her parents and before the altar, filled me with inexpressible dread, and I felt myself a

prey to an undefined apprehension beyond the confessed difficulties of my situation. I behaved to her *en route* with distant but kind politeness; and no one who had seen us would have imagined our relative positions. I had no hope of success in this painful struggle but in going beyond her. After a journey full of embarrassments, which we performed without pause, my object being to reach my residence in Paris as speedily as possible, we arrived at our destination. I welcomed her with ceremonial kindness as an honored guest. I took an opportunity in her presence to order my own private chamber to be prepared for the night; and handing her the key of hers, said aloud to her *femme de chambre*,—

"'You will find two beds in madame's boudoir; I desire that, with her permission, you occupy one, and never neglect to do so, without her especial order.'

"I cannot describe the expression of the countess at that moment. A frightful vision appeared to have been dispelled: she looked as one unexpectedly reprieved from death. Her features, which had been rigid with the fixed resolution that seemed hitherto to have influenced her, relaxed into an expression of the sincerest gratitude; and, after a moment's reflection, she drew from her bosom a small phial, and placing it hurriedly into my hands, she rushed from the room. It was poison! I was horror-struck! Oh, how humiliating was my situation! Into what extremity had I plunged the being most dear to me on earth! Her, for whose happiness I would have sacrificed all that I valued in this world, save HERSELF! And she, what would she not have done to rid herself of me! Forlorn and hopeless, what had I done that Nature should put her hateful mark on me thus? An angel was shutting the door of Paradise against me. A burst of anguish succeeded, but after a time my feelings became tranquil, and I

turned for comfort to the recollection that I was at any rate in the same home with her; that I should daily breathe the same air, and occupy myself in the same pursuit, agreeably to my scheme. I felt a gush of thankfulness that absorbed my being. This was true love.

"It was late on the following day before the countess appeared in the saloon; her color had somewhat returned, and a smile of grateful calmness gleamed in her sweet face. Already it was evident that a sympathy was awakened in her, though as yet of no warmer a nature than gratitude. I was cheered. One point was gained. She no longer avoided me as a hateful thing; and though she sometimes trembled, as a consciousness of her situation came over her, my conduct, at once frank and respectful, restored her to confidence.

"My first object was to find a congenial current for her thoughts, and to divert them by useful and agreeable occupation. She had received her education as an *externe* at a Breton convent, which affords instruction both economical and sound. I surrounded her with associations of taste and beauty,—books, sculptures, pictures; and contrived for her, during a temporary absence of one day, a surprise that must delight her taste: in place of a wall of tapestry that divided her chamber from a conservatory of the rarest flowers, I had one of glass erected with a speed equalling that of magic. Masters of celebrity in the various accomplishments which her talents qualified her to attain, gave their assistance to her indefatigable assiduity, for of these intellectual pursuits she seemed never weary; and, ere a twelvemonth had flown past, my lovely companion was fitted to shine in the most *élite* circles of Paris.

"I had now gained two points: she had become even *happy* in her new position, and the foundation of a lasting sympathy was laid by my knowledge of her favorite authors

and composers, together with all those arts which she so ardently admired; at the same time, whilst blending my own with her pure taste, I was scrupulously careful to confine our sympathy to the *mental* elements which surrounded us. Sometimes I was paralysed with the tormenting question, for whom was I rearing so much perfection into life? I had my own experience to warn me that one glance, one single instant, might rob me of her heart! But for this torturing uncertainty (which, notwithstanding my vigorous efforts to check its intrusion, would too frequently disturb my happy calm), I was now in a state of bliss, too content to have purchased, by any sacrifice, the continuance of my felicity, and scarcely caring to wish for an addition to it, considering the fearful risk of losing all.

"But the time arrived when my wife must mingle in the society befitting her station. Instinctively she took its highest tone. I was not prepared for the universal admiration she attracted; and you may imagine the contrast between her charms and my appearance, when I tell you we were designated among the gay as '*La Belle et la Bête!*' Now began my tribulations—my combat with the world.

"Whoever is acquainted with Parisian society and the broad limits it prescribes itself, will comprehend the position in which madame was placed. On one hand was the temptation of all that was graceful and seductive in man, while there was nothing to oppose it but the mere abstract love of virtue unsupported by affection, even if not weakened by a sense of shame at being linked with a being who formed a butt for every shaft of ridicule. She was hourly followed by a crowd of admirers, by whom I was detested and regarded as an object of pity and compassion. Appearing to see nothing, I saw and felt all, for I had *all* at stake. Not a glance, not a word, escaped my observance. I calcu-

lated the character and pretensions of every man who, from fashion or fascination, fell into madame's train; but this was a miserable existence, upon the very threshold of dishonor (not for those who are used to it, and see in it only a conventional form of society; but for me, who judged by what the dignity of human nature ought to be)—it wrung my heart with bitterness and shame. I had now no resource but patience. I had entered for a desperate stake, and was determined to play it out. It would have been an easy thing to act the tyrant to my wife; but, alas! of all the evils that threatened me, the most imminent was her disgust,—that heaviest ill without a remedy; as it was, I had gained at least her *esteem*, and must not forfeit it. Possibly I may be blamed for thus placing her in the way of temptation, instead of withdrawing her into obscurity and retirement; but then my position rendered this impossible: besides, I detest half measures, which rarely secure even a half success. As I apprehended, she became intoxicated with the adulation showered upon her; and though virtuous at heart, her youth and inexperience exposed her to danger. I took all possible measures to prevent her being taken by surprise; and having confidential servants who were devoted to us, I was certain nothing could occur without my instant knowledge; but I was impatient to seize some opportunity for putting an end to this degrading situation.

"Among the constant visitors at our *réunions* was the Viscount de V——, who was openly the most sedulous attendant on madame. He was a young man of great personal attractions, high birth, and great wealth, witty and accomplished; so much so, that he had obtained the *sobriquet* of 'Crœsus Crichton.' The viscount's attentions to madame were offered with great *empressement*, and augmented the envy and jealousy with which the fashiona-

ble of her own sex regarded her. Scandal began to be busy. I could have sent the viscount a *cartel*, but this would have been his death, and I did not desire to become his murderer. He was an accomplished shot, but I was far his superior; for though I had never been known to fire a pistol, and was, to their seeming, exactly the man to be trifled with, they were mistaken. I could strike the *poupée* at forty paces, a dozen times in succession. Besides, his fire was slow; mine with the signal. I could not bring myself to injure this young man. He was frank, generous, and high-spirited, and there was nothing in his conduct but what the detestable habits of society permitted. He was, moreover, unconscious of the thorn that rankled in my heart, and how sorely he was pressing upon it. I did not hate his beauty because I was ugly, and I bore him no resentment; however, I dreaded lest madame's feelings should be entrammelled. I had never found it difficult to penetrate madame's exact sentiments. Hitherto she was free, but I should be culpable to let her be longer exposed to temptation. At this juncture a circumstance happened which, I perceived, if skilfully handled, might serve greatly to my advantage. A note fell into my hands directed to madame, and sealed with the viscount's arms. I did not hesitate to peruse it. It contained a pressing invitation to be allowed to attend her to the Duke of ——'s, to hear the divine Pasta (then in the zenith of her glory, and who was to execute the *chefs-d'œuvre* in *Nina*), before a *réunion* of the *élite* of Paris. The viscount and madame had executed much of this music together; and the note concluded by adding: 'Such heavenly sounds require your angelic company alone to realize all that is perfect on earth.' My resolution was taken. I determined to give madame the opportunity to accept this invitation. After carefully resealing the note, I caused it to be delivered

to madame. An hour afterwards I presented myself before her. I found her silent, thoughtful, and uneasy. It appeared to me that duty and a sense of decorum were strong—that virtue was not alarmed—and her simplicity blinded her to her danger. But when I stated the necessity for my absence at the Chambers, on affairs of government, till late at night, I became aware that the demon temptation was at work, from the urgency and anxiety with which she entreated me to remain. I, however, pleaded the necessity of my engagement, and retired to prepare for a result which I saw, by her want of fortitude, was inevitable. I need not say, the viscount conducted the countess to his own hotel, which I entered as soon as he, and followed them to his chamber. As I approached the door, I heard madame's voice loud in reproach, and on entering, found her standing in the middle of the room, scarlet with indignation, the viscount on his knees before her. I closed the door after me, and turned the key. My wife sank upon the sofa, overwhelmed by her feelings. The viscount rose from his knees, full of mortification, but maintaining the perfect self-possession of a man of the world. I drew a pair of pistols from my cloak, and, placing them on a table, took my seat opposite to him.

"'Will it not be more in keeping,' said he, pointing to the weapons, 'to await the lady's absence?'

"'From your manner, Monsieur le Vicompte,' I replied, coolly, 'one would imagine I had come for your wife, instead of my own.'

"At the sound of my voice madame recovered herself. She seemed astonished at my composure, and rising in embarrassment, would have placed herself beside me, but I repulsed her, saying,—

"'When you can bring your heart with you will be time enough.'

"She cast a reproachful look upon me, and sank again into her seat, covering her face with her hands. There was a pause, which the count at length broke by saying,—

"'This triumph, monsieur, is somewhat lengthy; will you take satisfaction on the spot, or what do you propose?'

"'I did not come to seek your blood,' replied I.

"'Why, then, these pistols?' he inquired.

"'Because,' I said, 'I would have you know what I say arises from principle, not from fear. Monsieur le Vicompte, I came not here to upbraid you. I came to convince madame of the viciousness of that circle of folly with which she suffers herself to be surrounded—to prove to her the danger which attends it. Whether I belie the galaxy of satellites that float around her, she herself shall be the judge. You love my wife, Monsieur le Vicompte—you have told her so a thousand times. You have pitied her for being sacrificed to a monster like myself—you set off your own perfections against my deformity. I love her too. Now, let her be judge of the difference in the quality of your love and mine. Monsieur, I come to make you happy. I give this lady to you. You are a bachelor; I can be divorced; you shall marry her, and that which on earth you most desire shall be yours.'

"The viscount was thrown completely off his guard. I knew full well he was in a position in the Luxembourg, in a certain exalted quarter, that rendered matrimony the sure path to disgrace and banishment from the gay world.

"'Let her,' I continued, 'share your love, your high station, your affluence; she will well become it all. On the honor of a man consumed with wretchedness and misery, she is as pure as when first she quitted her father's home. Ah, Monsieur, you are amazed! You dream not what wretches, such as I, whose bones are covered in an unbeauteous case, are doomed to suffer. Monsieur, you pause.

Do you hesitate to take that, now it is offered, which you have sought so long, with such eager passion and open perseverance, in the sight of all the world? Is your boastful affection mere words—the folly of the hour, the herald of shame and repentance? Be prompt, monsieur; make your decision, and end this hateful scene.'

"'I was not prepared for this,' said the viscount, in vain endeavoring to overcome his embarrassment. 'I cannot submit to this result—I must have recourse to the argument on the table.'

"'Observe, madam,' I said, addressing myself to my wife, 'you are rejected. Nay, rather than receive you honorably, this gentleman, who professes to love you, would seek to escape you, even in the arms of death. Is this enough? Is this humiliation—degradation, or will you help me to a name befitting it?'

"Whilst I spoke she rose from the sofa, and placed herself behind my chair. She leaned upon my shoulder—I felt her tremble. Her tears fell fast—they were drops of precious balm upon my heart. I addressed myself anew to the viscount.

"'You sit there, monsieur, with all the blandishments that Nature can lavish upon a man, the idol of the opposite sex, the envy of your own, sated with success. You see before you one of the unfortunates of her caprice—one who has but a single pretension to humanity, and that is invisible—it is his heart! It is thought among you, that because I have a rough exterior, to aspire to the beautiful is in me a crime—that I have no title to affections! Oh, monsieur, could you but see the rich mine of love within this poor exterior, treasured for none in this vast crowd save her—this fairest creature, you would hold me in contempt no more! Listen, Monsieur le Vicompte—I will conceal nothing from you. I loved this lady from the first hour

she blessed my sight, with a passion that consumed my being, and left no choice between its gratification and utter misery. She married me in hate—her heart was turned against me, and she would only consent to live, on condition of a friendship so cold that my soul was frozen in its element. Yet, day by day, I offered up an untired patience —a watchful affection, on this shrine. Hope was almost dead within me, yet still I hoped! Love was ashamed to feel so abject, yet still I loved! Behold the quality of my affection—contrast it with that of the libertine! Oh, monsieur, judge my feelings at seeing that which is mine, but to which I dare not aspire, freely played for by you and others. And for what? To throw away! The very terms by which I hold existence ('for oh, madame,' I continued, turning towards her, 'nothing can quench my love but death!') thrown by as a cast-off garment. You, monsieur, are a man of fashion and of the world, yet, unlike your peers, you have a fresh and noble heart. Plead for me—in charity give me the influence of that seductive voice which you renounce on your own account. You owe me somewhat for my patience—teach her that there is a charm in the innate soul greater than the man corporeal! Teach her to believe that in me, unsightly and contemned, she rejects all that man can offer, forbear, or suffer for her sake!'

"I had not miscalculated the viscount; he arose from his seat with emotion, and approached me.

"'How little do we know the misery we inflict on others!' said he. 'Noble De Perron, forgive me; and you, madame, I ask your pardon. Cherish, I implore you, an affection so devoted: show but an equal constancy, and the world, which is now permitted to look on you with compassion, will stand aloof with admiration. I will make what amends I can,' he added, wringing my hands as he left the room.

"I conducted my wife to our home and made no alteration in my conduct towards her, except that, if possible, I was more humble, kind, and attentive, than heretofore; while her self-abasement was so great, that it was many days before I could restore her cheerful confidence.

"The viscount conducted himself as a man of honor, at a cost that the mere man of *ton* would shrink from. He stopped the mouth of scandal by the sacrifice of his own vanity. The night following, madame was surprised (though I was not) to see him enter our saloon, and with perfect ease and assurance, pay his court to her as before, and even in a more marked and public manner. After what had occurred, this insult stung her to the quick (as was his intention). A freezing coldness, not unmingled with scorn, was returned by madame, which was soon perceived by the assembly. For the next two nights he pursued the same course, and submitted to the same ordeal, making it to be understood that he had accomplished a failure. He then retired with well feigned mortification and confusion, thereby establishing the reputation of madame, and saving her from the attempts of others, as few could hope to please where the most accomplished courtier of the day had failed.

"Madame had bought experience, and became retiring and circumspect, but was not adequate to the difficult task of drawing lustre from a licentious circle by despising it—an art which she afterwards acquired to perfection, as the following circumstance will show.

"There was at that time in great vogue in Paris the Chevalier de Roseville, a fellow notorious for every vice under the sun. His real name was Bois le Dreux, from the Lyonnais; like myself, sprung from humble origin. This man could boast neither refinement nor accomplishments; but he had a quick capacity, that could adapt itself

to all persons and occasions. His figure was symmetrical, and his countenance handsome, but faded with the pallor of dissipation. He was a successful and unscrupulous gambler, cruel and vicious in intrigue, a professed duellist, and well known master of his weapons. He revelled in a princely fortune, accumulated by cards and dice, and every imaginable species of villany. By means of his wealth he found a way into the highest ranks of society, and by his remorseless reputation he held his way unattacked. If it could be said I entertained a feeling of hate to any human creature, that was the man. De Roseville, uninvited, mingled with the visitors at my house. The retiring of the one was the signal for the other's *entrée;* for the viscount was a sort of game he did not care to come in contact with. He was introduced by a party who did not dare refuse him; for it was but a week previous that he shot a youth named De l'Orme, of good family and inoffensive character, merely to keep up his reputation and create intimidation.

"From the moment he entered my house this man established himself at the side of madame: he became a complete persecution. But I was not sorry for this, as I desired nothing so much as to give her an entire disgust to these impertinences. Already my courage had been canvassed—a challenge, and, consequently, my death, was daily looked for by the gaping crowd. In truth, my patience was well nigh exhausted, when the viscount, who, from the time we had come to an understanding of each other's character, had been entirely in my confidence, gave me reasons to fear that De Roseville had set his will that he would not be baffled by madame, and it was probable that he would resort to the base and desperate means which he was well known to have taken more than once before, and which was neither more nor less than an *enlèvement.* It was clear the villain must be dealt with at once; but *how*, was a matter

of no small deliberation, for, from the first, I had resolved madame's name should not be sullied in the matter. I entered into a project with the viscount, and we together, that evening, attended the club which he frequented. We made for the table where he sat, and commenced play. Our intrusion struck De Roseville with evident surprise: he whispered to his companion, with an expression between a smile and a sneer. De Roseville was as expert as a juggler; let him shuffle, cut, nay but touch the cards, when out of your hands, it was fatal. I was not long in finding legitimate cause for attacking him.

"'Monsieur de Roseville,' I said, addressing him in a tone that drew all eyes upon us, and made the attack unflinchingly personal, 'I do not approve the manner in which you have cut those cards. You have placed an honor—it is the ace of spades!'

"I turned over the cards and showed the one named. It was but a guess, however; yet, as the stakes were heavy, and this was the card he wanted, the cheat might be considered a certainty. He was confounded.

"I continued my attack.

"'Your habit of cheating, and your impostures of all sorts, are so notorious, that, if the company are of my mind, every honest man amongst them will lend a finger to lodge you in the street.'

"Play was suspended; all eyes were concentrated on the stranger, who had dared to beard the lion in his den. De Roseville was livid with ire.

"'You are tired of your life, monsieur, it would seem,' he said, in a voice hoarse with rage.

"'If I were,' was my reply, 'you are precisely the man to whom I would come to rob me of it. But while I have yet to live, I will make the most of my breath, by telling you what you are—the hated and detested of all Paris!

You are a remorseless and unscrupulous murderer! De l'Orme, who never fired a shot till he faced you, and whom you murdered to keep up your reputation for blood, is hardly cold in his grave! The flesh is still firm upon the poor Arnaud's bones, whom you put out of the way to leave his sisters unprotected! Young Le Grange you killed to stop his mouth, after robbing him of his fortune! And more—how many more are known to have been sacrificed to glut your evil passions! Messieurs, you know these things to be true! You know this villain, who crawls into the very bosom of our families, leaving his track of venom where'er he glides, to be a scoundrel, for whom the *bagne* were too merciful! Is there no shame that you permit such a monster to breathe amongst you? Is it that you *fear* him? or are you willingly his fellows?'

"I believed De Roseville to be a coward at bottom, but who found courage in the impunity of success and skill. I was determined to strike terror into his very heart, and deprive him of his dangerous power.

"'Villain!' I continued, 'how many families have you ruined to acquire your wealth? How many of your victims are at this moment pining in poverty and anguish, or have been driven to madness and solitary death? Your daily occupation is to betray innocence, and your nights are given to plunder. You have shed blood enough to swim in; and are feared and hated of all men—a curse to your species.'

"(The table was between us, and he had risen, pale as death, and stupified with the audacity and violence of my attack. He glared around upon the spectators, but there was a dead silence.)

"'Will any one gainsay what I have said? Henceforth, my friends, never fear a villain; for my part, when I meet a wretch, who is not only out of the pale which protects all

gentlemen, but beyond that of humanity also, I serve him thus;'—and seizing suddenly by the throat with one hand, while the other grasped his collar, spite of a feeble resistance, and a few random blows, I dragged him over the table into the middle of the room. As a *lutteur*, or Breton wrestler, I was too great an adept to let him keep his equilibrium; and his dissipated frame was like a child's in my grasp. There was a breathless silence, amounting to awe, for it was felt I was to pay my *life* for this. At length I threw him violently to the ground, and bestowing on him a slight kick as a mark of contempt, I left the place accompanied by the viscount.

"To mark the point of what next followed, it is necessary I should explain to you that, at the time when what I am relating occurred, it was a common habit to fight duels by proxy: that is to say, men of a similar description to Venetian bravos were to be hired, at a hundred or two francs; they were to be met with at every *café* of a certain description, and would undertake your quarrel against any individual you might wish to remove, by insulting him, compelling him to come out, and shooting him—an event which, as they were invariably good shots, was sure to happen. It was their livelihood; and those who knew the depravities which hung about Paris will bear me out, that these miscreants augmented their price according to the nature of the wound to be inflicted, or the death of the party. Having thus far explained, that you may understand what follows, I shall further observe with respect to duelling, that there is no crime my soul equally abhors, nor is there one more worthy of moral condemnation. At the time to which I am referring, blood was shed like water; and many ghastly bodies might be seen daily stretched out at the *Morgue*, robbed prematurely of life. I used to feel in passing this public receptacle, that no picture within the

range of humanity could be more distressing; and was weighed down with the reflection of the domestic distress, broken hearts, and desolate hearths, caused by this legalized but dreadful crime. The day following my attack on De Roseville I was publicly insulted by one of these brigands, and a cartel was immediately delivered, to which I returned no answer. That night I was posted as a coward at the most frequented club-room, and other public places in Paris. I immediately caused the following note to be placed beside the placard, wherever it was found:—

"'Monsieur Perron knows not his challenger; but until he has settled an affair with a *polisson*, who passes by the name of 'The Chevalier de Roseville,' but whose real name is 'Bois le Dreux,' an impostor from the Lyonnais, and who is under his personal chastisement, M. Perron does not consider himself at liberty. After that event, he pledges himself to answer all comers, from a hundred to a thousand francs.'

"This *ruse*, therefore, failed; and the tables were completely turned on De Roseville, who had now no means of escaping from contempt and obloquy but the field. I received his challenge accordingly. In this case I was resolved to leave as little as possible to chance. The choice of the weapons was with me. I should have chosen to fight an American duel, with the all-fatal rifle, but this was not then in use, and I feared De Roseville, not knowing my expertness at the pistol, would raise an objection. I therefore went to the *Salle d'Armes*, which he frequented, and found him there, in the act of practising, surrounded by a party of his colleagues, looking pale and disfigured from our late scuffle. I bowed slightly and passed on. This was an opportunity of making him know what he had to expect, and I resolved not to miss it. I took twenty

shots at the *poupée* (a doll as big as my thumb, made of India-rubber, painted white, which dipped when struck, and recovered itself by means of a spring). I displaced it with ease every time: but I was somewhat embarrassed, as I did not wish him to become aware of the secret of my quick fire, and I dwelt upon my aim in a manner quite different from my usual style. I heard from the viscount that Roseville was aghast; his practice was bad, and altogether he was quite out of himself. The duel was on the following morning. Roseville had agreed to my proposition to use rifles. You see that one hanging against the wall, small in bore, and nearly six feet in length—a real Kentuckian? It is the one I fought with. I doubt not you will be surprised to hear that I insisted on madame's presence at the duel; possibly you condemn such a measure; it certainly was an outrage against all prescribed rules of society. But though I will not confess to eccentricity (of which I am often accused), and for this reason, that my motives of action are strong and consistent, whereas eccentricity is more or less extravagant, and borders on absurdity; yet I will admit, that in extraordinary positions I do not hesitate to avail myself of extraordinary means to produce a result. In fact, the air of my native mountains still influences my nature, though full half my life has been spent in Paris. I am a sort of mongrel, so to speak, between barbarism and refinement. I will, however, state the reasons that actuated me in this particular. I meant it as an effectual preventive to her being in future a prey to these hunters after intrigue, these pests of society; intending she should suppose our quarrel arose on her account, as in truth it did. I had also a latent hope, that her seeing my life placed in jeopardy for her, after my long patience and inexhaustible kindness, would touch the right chord! You shall see how far I was correct in this conjecture.

"She never did, nor ever would have questioned my will. I requested her to envelope herself in my large travelling cloak, and to remain in the carriage a silent spectator to whatever might occur. We took up the viscount, and without exchanging a word reached the ground before my antagonist had arrived.

"He was not long behind, and the preliminaries were quickly arranged. We were to be placed at a hundred paces' distance, and advance upon each other step by step, with the option of firing at discretion. But woe to him who should fire first and miss! His opponent had only to approach and put the muzzle to his breast. Such was the arrangement.

"I never once thought of failure, so entire was my self-confidence; and I had, throughout, no intention of killing my man—this would have been contrary to my fixed principle. My object was to strike him on the right shoulder, so as to disable the limb, and for the future put it out of his power to gamble, intrigue, or murder, as he had been in the habit of doing for so long a time. But now the moment was come, and I had the opportunity of doing what the laws should have done for me—nerved also with the conviction that I was making common cause with humanity—my repugnance to shed blood rose powerful within me; but I summoned all my firmness to go through with the part I had assigned myself. As the shoulder would be somewhat covered with the stock of the rifle, my aim must be to the greatest nicety. I examined his piece; it was ill-chosen for his, and well for my purpose, being very thin at the stock, and badly balanced. His only chance was in a near approach before he fired.

"We were placed.

"I looked upon madame; she was pale, but motionless as a statue. I nodded cheerfully to her. The signal was

given at that instant, and we advanced towards each other at a funereal pace, our rifles poised, and fingers on the trigger—watchful as lynxes at every motion. This slow process—while death hangs in the air over one's head—is apt to try the nerves. Mine were as cool as if I had been waiting for a hart in the thicket. I have said, the secret of my success depended on the quickness of my aim, for I get an instantaneous sight. If he approached within sixty yards I could execute any manœuvre I pleased. He came within thirty yards—a murderous distance—he then stopped rather suddenly, and brought his rifle to his shoulder; it was somewhat covered, but I fired and the ball went straight as an ace to its aim; yet, keeping as closely as possible to the wood of his stock, which was carved, it glanced against an angle and shot upwards. De Roseville whirled round two or three times and fell on his face, his piece going off in the air.

"When turned over he presented a spectacle too dreadful to describe. His jaw was shattered, and the right eye forced from its socket—a fitting spectacle for a duellist! I felt sick at heart, and madame was horror-struck. We drove rapidly home, without giving vent to our feelings in words. Sobs, however, broke from her; and the movement of the cloak in which she remained enveloped, showed how powerful was her emotion.

"When we entered our room she rushed into my arms, and threw herself upon my bosom, imploring forgiveness for the past. I felt her heart throb upon my own—her tears wet my cheek—SHE WAS MINE!!! Here, then, was at last an end to all my sufferings!! To describe my feelings would be impossible—rapture, too great almost for nature to support!

"From that hour to the present no cloud has passed over our unvarying sympathies, not a cold word has broken the harmony of our communion."

The narrative of M. Perron, told with all the earnestness that the recapitulation would awaken in one who could revel in the remembrance of past woe as compared with present bliss, affected me with deep emotion. Nothing could surpass the interest it excited in me, now that I had become acquainted with my extraordinary host and hostess.

M. Perron, also, subsequently concluded the fate of De Roseville.

"For many years after the above happy termination of all my sufferings, a man was led through the streets of Paris in poverty and darkness, begging his bread. That man was De Roseville! The injuries of the duel, in the sequel, deprived him of both his eyes. The plunderer, in his helpless condition, was, in his turn, plundered of his ill-gotten wealth. He had neither friend nor conscience to console him. The last few years of his degraded existence were supported by a pittance which I caused to be delivered to him by an unknown hand.

"The viscount redeemed himself even beyond my hopes, much as I reckoned on his good natural dispositions. We continue to live on terms of the sincerest friendship and mutual esteem."

Here my narrative must end; and I hope my readers will acknowledge, that an acquaintance with these particulars of their early career added no little zest to the enjoyment I experienced whilst domiciled with M. and Madame Perron. I trust, also, they will share the regret with which I took leave of personages of such intrinsic worth.

# Match-Making.

EARLY in a beautiful morning in the lovely month of June, the pretty little village of Alderfield was all astir, two or three gigs and other vehicles were already drawn from their respective depositories, and preparing for service, and now and then a fair face peeped from an upper window, and was almost instantly withdrawn, irradiated with a smile of pleasure at the favorable appearance of the weather. Well might peaceful little Alderfield be awake and alive, for this was the appointed day for Mrs. Weatherhill's picnic party, which had formed the theme of the village gossip and conjecture for the last ten days at least. To be sure only a select few of the villagers were invited, but those who were *out* were naturally anxious to know who were *in*, and those who were not going, had risen thus laudably early to watch the movements of those who were.

Mrs. Weatherhill, the promoter of the present festivity, was generally considered by herself and others as the principal personage in Alderfield, inasmuch as she possessed an independent property, and decidedly took the lead in

society on all occasions. Her house was the largest, her dress the most fashionable, and her barouche the only one in the village. She had no children, and was not in the least impeded in the exercise of her will by a little fat gouty husband, who seldom spoke at all, and when he attempted to do so, was talked down at once by his lady. His own fortune was small; she had inherited a large one at an early age; and why she had married Mr. Weatherhill, nobody could surmise, unless it was to show her entire independence of opinion, and her perfect freedom of will.

She was a stout but very comely dame of forty-five or thereabouts, with a pleasant voice and smile, a merry laugh, and a manner peculiarly attractive from its warmth and heartiness. She was a great patroness of "young people," especially young ladies, fond of "having them with her," and devising pleasures for them, sometimes not over-judicious in their character. "What did girls go from home for but to enjoy themselves?" she would often remark, as if home were a place destitute of enjoyments, instead of forming the centre of the very best and purest pleasures. So, when she had young friends staying with her, which was very frequently the case, she took good care that they should never "lose a day;" for she would have considered twenty-four hours' respite from the pursuit of pleasure as so much lost time. What with parties at home and abroad, by land and by water, drives to the county town, and visits to every exhibition that might happen to be stationed there, she contrived to keep her guests in a very undesirable state of excitement from their arrival to their departure. At the time my story begins, she had two very pretty girls for her inmates, and it was principally on their account that she had planned a party to Ilston Abbey, a fine old ruin some seven or eight miles from Alderfield. A very wet season had marred several previous projects of the kind, therefore

Mrs. Weatherhill and her invited guests looked forward with no little anxiety to the day, and watched the barometer with intense interest. Great was the joy of all concerned when a cloudless morning gave promise of some hours of equally cloudless enjoyment, and all prepared with alacrity to set forth. Mrs. Weatherhill had private reasons, also, for wishing her plan to prosper. She considered this party of much greater importance than as a mere matter of amusement, and had anxieties and hopes on the subject as yet only known to herself. She unfortunately delighted in that mischievous and unwarrantable interference in the affairs of others called match-making, and she hoped on this occasion to lay the foundations of two marriages at least. Two gentlemen, whom she asked to join her party, seemed to her precisely suited to her two young guests, who were neither of them, as far as she knew, pre-engaged; and so far from suspecting that there was anything improper in her designs, she gave herself great credit for planning two such eligible unions. She was sure Arthur Bonnington must want a wife. He must be dreadfully lonely in his rumbling old house, with nothing but his books to amuse him: and with his large fortune, it was a burning shame that he did not marry. Could any woman be found more sure to suit him than Lucy Austin, who was as quiet, and almost as fond of books as himself; very pretty, well born and bred; and supposing she had no fortune, what could that signify to a man so wealthy as Mr. Bonnington? Mary Granby, her other protegée, was a very different girl from Lucy; but she would therefore be more likely to please the fancy of young Scarborough, the surgeon, newly settled in Y——(the county town), who, as Mrs. Weatherhill said to herself, must marry somebody at any rate, if he meant to get into respectable practice. Mary was a handsome, shrewd, showy girl, active and cheerful, and well able to

take a prominent place in society—no small merit in the wife of a medical man aiming at popularity. Moreover, she had, or rather was to have, a thousand pounds, the legacy of her godmother, but at present in her father's hands; he having been executor to the old lady in question. Mrs. Weatherhill, who, no one knew how, had a very intimate knowledge of the private affairs of all her acquaintances, was aware that Mr. Scarborough had also some property independent of his profession: and the match seemed in every way so equal, that she thought it would be an actual sin not to try to bring it about. Anxiously, therefore, did the "foundress of the feast" anticipate her picnic to Ilston.

Nine o'clock, the appointed hour of assembling, had arrived, and Mrs. Weatherhill's barouche was at the door, and Mr. Weatherhill safely bestowed in one corner of it. Then the young ladies took their places, and Mrs. Weatherhill followed, having first seen divers well stocked baskets and hampers, and sundry cloaks and umbrellas, packed into a light cart, which was to attend them to the abbey. Then came a family jaunting-car, with its family load—father, mother, and three or four grown and growing-up daughters; then Dr. Derwent's gig, bearing the worthy rector and his lady; and lastly, Mr. Sanderson, the attorney's vehicle, occupied by its owner, a sturdy old bachelor, accompanied by his maiden sister. Thus the procession moved off, but did not by any means include the whole party; for many were to join it on the road, and several stragglers from remote quarters were to meet the main body at the abbey.

Certainly Mary Granby looked very stylish in the smart silk pelisse and gay hat which Mrs. Weatherhill had recommended her to wear on the occasion; and Lucy Austin never was prettier than in the simple white dress and straw bonnet, which her own perception of the fitness of things

had taught her to adopt. And Mrs. Weatherhill thought, as she looked on them, that never were two damsels more captivating, or more sure of conquest; the only fear that shadowed her pleasure being, lest by any dire mischance, either of the beaux should fail to keep appointment; lest Arthur Bonnington should have been seized with a fit of shyness or low spirits—no uncommon occurrence; or young Scarborough called away to attend to some broken limb, or case of sudden illness. But her apprehensions proved groundless; for when the party from Alderfield arrived at Ilston, the two young men were already there; and it seemed a good omen to Mrs. Weatherhill that they had been punctual to their appointment.

Mrs. Weatherhill was now in her glory. Before the loiterers of the company arrived, she had managed to establish Arthur Bonnington as the temporary guardian of Lucy Austin, and to fasten Mary Granby on young Scarborough's arm; and the group had soon dispersed among the ruins, or were tracing the little winding paths of the neighboring woods, with that quickly-increasing friendliness which grows nowhere so rapidly as on a rural excursion, such as this whereof I write.

It would take up too much space to detail all that was said or done on that momentous day. Suffice it, that it was unmarked by serious accident or unfavorable change of the weather, which circumstances will occasionally mar the delights of a party of pleasure; that Mrs. Weatherhill's schemes seemed to thrive beyond her utmost hopes; and that, before bidding them good-night, she had engaged both Arthur Bennington and young Scarborough to dine at her house early in the following week. The readiness with which her invitation was accepted, she took as an excellent omen of the impression already made on the minds of the gentlemen in question by the charms of her fair visitants.

From that evening to the day of her dinner party, Mrs. Weatherhill, when alone with Lucy and Mary, talked of little except the two young men, who, she maintained, had paid them such marked attention; and whilst Lucy, with native delicacy, shrank from her rallying on the subject of Arthur Bonnington, Mary, whilst deprecating far more loudly the jest respecting Mr. Scarborough and herself, evidently enjoyed it. She laughed and listened, and she did not listen heedlessly. She was by no means so much attached to a country home—in whose neighborhood eligible bachelors were anything but plentiful, where she was under the guidance of rather homely parents, and expected to take an active part in the management of six younger brothers and sisters—as to object to leave it, if a tolerably good opportunity for doing so offered. Besides, having arrived at the age usually called that of discretion, she was exceedingly anxious to get possession of her "own thousand pounds," which, as we have said, were at present in her father's hands. Her marriage would be an event, she thought, after which he could have no possible pretext for retaining it; and incited by these considerations, and Mrs. Weatherhill's representations of the advantages of the match, she boldly resolved that, if Harry Scarborough did propose for her, she would accept him. If he did not, she was not yet desperately in love with him, and there was no harm done.

Full of these thoughts, she dressed herself in the most becoming style she could devise, resolved that Mr. Scarborough should not find her less charming in a drawing-room than in the ruins of Ilston Abbey; and so effectually did she carry out her intentions on the occasion of their second meeting, that Scarborough, during his long solitary ride from Alderfield to Y——, owned to himself that she had impressed him as no woman had ever done before. He had

been for some time thinking of looking out for a wife: and hearing from Mrs. Weatherhill an account of the "high respectability" of Miss Granby's connexions, accompanied by a judicious hint of her forthcoming thousand pounds, a few more visits to the enchantress decided his course. He proposed, and was duly accepted; and Mrs. Weatherhill thanked heaven, while she applauded her own foresight for the favorable termination of one of her plans.

That her other project respecting Arthur Bonnington and Lucy Austin was likely to end as much to her mind, she was still doubtful; for though there were many symptoms which she deemed auspicious, there was little appearance of progress in the affair. To any close observer, indeed, it would have been evident that Lucy was anything but slightly interested in this event. Her heart, with its pure, young, untried affections, was already the prize—alas! the unsolicited prize—of the quiet and somewhat melancholy student. He evidently preferred her society to that of any other member of Mrs. Weatherhill's circle, and listened to her music, and pointed out the beauties of his favorite authors, and talked to her by the hour together in a low earnest voice, as he did to none beside. But it was not of love—not of marriage. He was pleased to find one so gentle and intellectual, who would listen unweariedly to the revealings of his romantic imaginations and somewhat morbid sensibilities; and this, which in fact was but refined egotism, poor Lucy received with love and gratitude, as proofs of his affectionate confidence. It might heve been so—she might soon have grown necessary to his happiness in this very character of patient and sympathizing *confidante*—and with her unselfish and devoted nature, they might have been married and happy. But Mrs. Weatherhill unfortunately took it into her head that she could expedite matters by enlightening Mr. Bonnington's

mind as to her own view of the case. She was convinced his modest diffidence alone stood in his way; at any rate, it was her duty not to permit Miss Austin's affections to be trifled with. Accordingly, having contrived a *tête-à-tête* with the tardy lover, she introduced the subject by naming the approaching marriage of Miss Granby to Mr. Scarborough. From that it was easy to allude to the party to Ilston, and thence to glide to the topic of his own supposed attachment to Lucy. Mr. Bonnington heard her, first with surprise, then with evident vexation.

"You really distress me, Mrs. Weatherhill; you are laboring under some strange delusion. I consider Miss Lucy Austin as a most excellent and estimable young lady, but I have never for a moment thought of her in the light you allude to."

"Then why, in the name of wonder, Mr. Bonnington, have you acted in such a manner towards her? Why have you paid her such marked attention ever since your first introduction to her? I am sure Henry Scarborough has scarcely showed a greater preference for Mary than you for Miss Austin; and now you tell me that it all meant nothing."

"I told you no such thing, Mrs. Weatherhill. I said, and I still say, that I respect and esteem Miss Austin; I consider her in the light of one of my most valued friends; but I have never given her cause to suppose that I wished to engage her regard in any more serious character. You forget also, that a great portion of what you call attentions, I could not avoid paying to the lady, dictated as they were by yourself."

"By me, Mr. Bonnington?"

"Certainly. Did we walk, you bade me escort her; did we dance, you solicited me as her partner: and so on through all our intercourse. I will not say that I did not

prefer these arrangements, but prudence would probably have made me less exclusive in them but for your own directions."

"Then my poor Lucy is to be deceived and deserted!" exclaimed Mrs. Weatherhill; "that gentlest, most affectionate creature, to be wounded so deeply and fatally. Oh, Mr. Bonnington! you have deceived us all!"

"You use strong language, madam. I cannot accuse myself of having ever wilfully deceived any one, and there can be no desertion in a case like the present. In one point, I both hope and believe you are mistaken. I am sure Miss Austin has too much good sense to bestow her affections unsought; least of all, where there could be so little inducement to do so. I am sorry, very sorry, this misunderstanding has occurred, as it must, for some time at least, deprive me of the pleasure of Miss Austin's society."

So saying, he arose, and bidding Mrs. Weatherhill good morning, abruptly quitted the house.

Yet, as he rode back to his lonely mansion, Arthur Bonnington, in recalling the events of the last few weeks, felt less at ease in his mind than he had anticipated. Now that his attentions to Lucy Austin had been remarked upon by a third party, they struck his own conscience in a way they had never done before, and he felt that he was not wholly free from blame, should she have misinterpreted them. Yet Mrs. Weatherhill's conduct had been most preposterous. Had that lady had the discretion to remain quiet, had she not prematurely spoken to him on the subject of Lucy Austin, it is not unlikely that the gentle charms of the fair girl might have wakened in a heart that deemed itself for ever blighted a purer passion than it had ever known. But Mrs. Weatherhill could not be passive; even when things looked most favorably, she must interfere; and

her eagerness in this instance had defeated its own purpose. Arthur Bonnington, as he rode home that day, came to a conviction that he had narrowly escaped the machinations of an inveterate match-maker, whose designs it was an absolute duty to circumvent.

Meanwhile, how fared it with Lucy? She knew not, till some angry expressions from Mrs. Weatherhill indicated the fact, that some violent and unsatisfactory explanation had occurred between that lady and Arthur Bonnington; and, alas! with that knowledge came the bitter feeling that she had been compromised and degraded in his opinion by the imprudent conduct of one who ought to have shielded her delicacy with the care of a mother. She said nothing; but her varying color and trembling limbs told a tale of mental suffering most intelligible to good Miss Sanderson, who happened to be present when the disclosure took place. With that tact which is an inestimable quality when united to kindness of heart, she found a speedy pretext for withdrawing Lucy from the room, and conducting her to the quiet precincts of her own chamber. There a flood of tears relieved the poor girl, and told more eloquently than words the wound that her womanly feelings had received.

Alas! it was too true that Lucy had ventured to love, before her affections had been explicitly sought by him to whom she had yielded them. She loved, too, with a depth and tenderness which Mrs. Weatherhill was quite unable to appreciate. All *her* regret consisted in the failure of her project for a "good match;" and she would have expected Lucy to be consoled at once, could another as apparently suitable have been found. To say that the station and wealth of Mr. Bonnington had not contributed to increase the brightness of the visions that had floated through Lucy's mind, would be saying too much; but still she was as far from being a mere speculating husband-seeker as any

one could possibly be. But she had a kind and generous nature, whose impulses her contracted means had never yet permitted her to gratify. Her father was an officer and a gentleman; but beyond his half-pay, he had very little of this world's wealth, and Lucy had certainly admitted the idea of his happiness in *her* prosperity. Still, independent of all these considerations, she had loved dearly and truly, and now her vision—her bright and happy vision—was dashed to pieces in a moment. There was nothing to hope, except that Arthur Bonnington would utterly forget her, since, as her awakened fears suggested, he could only remember her with contempt and disgust. Could she have followed her own inclinations, she would at once have returned home; but Mrs. Weatherhill opposed her doing so on two accounts; first, that it would seem as if she were leaving abruptly on Arthur Bonnington's account; and, secondly, that Mary Granby, who was to be married next month, could by no means dispense with her services as bridesmaid. Mrs. Weatherhill had insisted that Miss Granby's nuptials should be solemnized at Alderfield; and the family of the bride, feeling all the convenience of the arrangement, had not offered any very vehement opposition to it.

Lucy was spared the pain of seeing Mr. Bonnington again during her stay, by his departure for the continent; and could she have found consolation in the propagation of an untruth, she might have received it from the general report of the neighborhood, that he had left the country in consequence of her refusal of him. A few days after his interview with Mrs. Weatherhill, he set out for London, and from thence proceeded to explore the beauties and romantic features of the woods and mountains of Germany, a country he had expressed a desire to visit. Amidst new scenes and people, it was natural that the events of the past should rapidly become less prominent in his mind; still there were

times when the idea would intrude, that if Lucy Austin were not a designing actor in Mrs. Weatherhill's schemes, she had not been quite fairly treated; and remembrances of her mild blue eyes, her varying cheek, and gentle voice, intruded amidst his day dreams more frequently than was quite consistent with his peace. Meantime, Lucy, under Mrs. Weatherhill's auspices, was dragged from scene to scene of gaiety, in which her sick heart could take no part, and was at once longing for and dreading her return to her humble home. The bitter idea that she had been lowered in the estimation of him whose regard she valued above that of every other person, was a sting in Lucy's bosom for whose poison there seemed to be no cure. The time arrived for the marriage of Mary Granby and Mr. Scarborough, and Mrs. Weatherhill's exultation knew no bounds. Here was a match that would in all probability have never taken place but for *her* management; and so said the bride's father, as he privately thanked her for the interest she had taken in his "dear girl's" welfare.

Lucy Austin did not fall a victim to brain-fever, or perish within a few months by the more insidious inroads of consumption; but if a broken or a blighted heart be one in which hope and happy love are crushed for ever, and whose capacity for the keen enjoyment of life, which youth should experience, is irretrievably lost, such was hers from the time of her unfortunate visit to Alderfield. Her constitution was never robust; and now, without being subject to any specific disorder, she gradually fell into delicate health, and in a year or two was considered amongst her friends as a confirmed invalid. Her father died; and as the slender provision he had been able to make for her was insufficient to support her in the house they had hitherto occupied, she disposed of her furniture, and went to board with a widowed female relative who resided at a small watering-place on the

east coast of England. She never revisited Alderfield, and her intercourse with that neighborhood consisted almost entirely in an occasional correspondence with an old acquaintance, Miss Sanderson, for whom she retained the most affectionate regard.

Five or six years had now gone by, and how had Mrs. Weatherhill's match-making prospered with Mr. and Mrs. Scarborough? Even worse than poor Lucy's wooing; for it was a mere union of apparent suitabilities, without any genuine foundation for mutual happiness. Mrs. Weatherhill had represented Mary Granby to her betrothed as a perfect treasure of ingenuity and industry; and certainly in her father's house, compelled by circumstances, she had displayed something of these qualities. But now, as a wife, she thought she had a right to be exempt from what she termed "mere drudgery," and having an overweening love of display, a considerable stock of pride, and a fondness for amusement, she was disposed to exercise her activity more in spending money than in saving it. She discovered also, within a very short time after her marriage, that Scarborough possessed a most violent temper; and to avoid its explosions, and at the same time to obtain what she wished to have, she descended to many mean and despicable subterfuges, which, when detected, were sure to draw down upon her a double portion of her husband's wrath. Besides, he had a constant source of complaint in the non-payment of the thousand pounds which her father still retained, and which no application could draw from him; and this subject was one which Scarborough never failed to mention when he had any dispute with his wife. In short, constant bickerings soon made their home a wretched one, and the husband gladly left it to seek society and amusement elsewhere. Mary, meanwhile, was not sorry for his frequent absence, as she thereby was enabled to pursue her own course of extra-

vagance and folly with more freedom; and the end of all this may be easily conceived. Scarborough got into difficulties, lost his business, fell into intemperate habits, and at the end of eight years after the gay bridal *fête* at Alderfield, Mary found herself a widow, with two helpless children, dependent on the bounty of her husband's relatives, whereby alone she was kept from utter destitution.

Arthur Bonnington's sojourn on the continent was protracted from month to month, till it had even extended to years, and when he did at last return to his solitary mansion, his visits to Mrs. Weatherhill were few, and the name of Lucy Austin never passed his lips. But it happened one day that business led him to call on Mr. Sanderson the attorney, and as that gentleman was from home, his client requested to see Miss Sanderson, as he wished to leave a message with her. He found the old lady sitting in her little parlor, and as he was announced, she laid down her spectacles and an open letter she had been perusing, and rose to receive him. But in vain she begged him to be seated; he heard as though he heard not, and stood for some moments with his eyes riveted on the letter, which seemed to absorb all his attention; for though it was years since he had seen it, he recognised the graceful though somewhat peculiar hand in which Lucy Austin, years ago, had transcribed for him some pieces of poetry.

Great was Miss Sanderson's surprise when, with flushed cheek and trembling voice, her visitor stammered out the question, "If that were not the hand-writing of Miss Lucy Austin?"

"It is," was the reply; "it is a letter which I received from her this morning."

Bonnington immediately inquired her present residence, adding to his question a hope that she was well.

"She is living at L——," was the answer. "I am sorry

to say her health is very indifferent. She has been delicate ever since she was at Alderfield, some years ago; and latterly, I fear, her illness is assuming a more alarming character."

"Miss Sanderson," said Bonnington, after an embarrassed pause, "you are a friend of Lucy—you have ever been so; for I well remember the respect and regard with which she used to speak of you, even in the early days of your acquaintance. I am anxious to ask you one strange question, and, believe me, I do so with a true and single purpose—not from curiosity, or for any other trifling reason. Do you think that Lucy Austin had ever any regard—in one word, do you think she ever *loved* me?"

"You do, indeed, ask a strange question, Mr. Bonnington," said Miss Sanderson, "and I scarcely feel justified in replying to it; but, trusting to your honor to keep my communication sacred, I will venture to tell you that, most unfortunately for herself, Lucy Austin did love you—I could find in my heart to say, far better than you deserved."

"Better, indeed," said Bonnington, sadly; "I must have seemed false and heartless in her eyes, and in yours also; but believe me, if I did trifle with her happiness, I did so most unwittingly. My heart had scarcely recovered the wounds inflicted by another's faithlessness, and knew not that her gentle influence, sweet and soothing though I felt it to be, could ever awaken a new affection within me. But now I know that this might have been, and that a purer and happier love than I had known before might have arisen for me, had not Mrs. Weatherhill's premature interference startled me from my dream. By her coarse intermeddling she aroused the suspicion that I was merely looked upon as a 'good speculation,' and the idea that Lucy knew and acquiesced in her design was most repulsive to my feelings. I determined to break through the net at once; I left Eng-

land in the first heat of my annoyance; but I have never since met man or woman whose affection could be to me what I now know Lucy Austin's might have been!"

Before Arthur Bonnington left Miss Sanderson, he had determined to visit L——— without delay, and if he found Lucy's sentiments respecting himself still unchanged, to offer her the only compensation he could for the years of suffering she had undergone, by proposing to make her his wife. In a few days his journey was accomplished, and he stood before the door of the humble dwelling that Lucy inhabited, striving to still the beating of his heart before he ventured to raise the knocker. The door was at length opened, and he was shown into an apartment, evidently prepared with some care for the reception of an invalid; *whom*, his fears too plainly told him. The little old-fashioned sofa was placed near the fire, and piled with pillows; a small table was drawn up beside it, and on this was laid an open bible, a plate with a few grapes, and a small vase of flowers. In a few seconds the door opened, and the mistress of the house entered. She was a pale, thin, lady-like personage; and though evidently embarrassed by the presence of a stranger, received Arthur with the greatest politeness. When informed that he was an old friend of Miss Austin, she shook her head, and said she feared Lucy was too weak to see any one whose presence might agitate her; but she also offered, if the gentleman would leave his name, to endeavor to prepare her cousin to meet him on the following day.

And on the morrow they met; he but little changed in outward appearance since their first interview amidst the woods and ruins of Ilston, she so wan, so wasted, so utterly altered, that, but for her voice, and the expression of her blue soft eye, he would scarcely have recognised her. It was a solemn meeting; but Lucy was calm, for she knew

that her destiny was fixed, and she dreaded not to speak of the past, which could exercise no further influence on the future. It was in vain that Arthur talked of hope, of renewed health, of years of love and happiness that they yet might pass together. She knew it could never be; yet she allowed him to call in further medical advice, and to remove her to a more genial climate, feeling that, by her compliance, she secured to him the after satisfaction of knowing that all had been done for her which could be done. But she told him these cares came too late; and she told him the truth. Six weeks after his visit to L———, Arthur Bonnington saw the earth laid over her who, but for the officious meddling of a *match-maker*, might have been living his happy and honored wife, blest herself, and diffusing blessings around her.

Mrs. Weatherhill wept bitterly when Bonnington detailed to her the circumstances of Lucy's death, and she had no defence to offer when her own indirect share in the catastrophe was referred to, except that she had "acted for the best." But Bonnington's upbraidings were not without a salutary effect. From that time forward Mrs. Weatherhill, as much from terror of public opinion as remorse, avoided interfering in any way with the marrying or giving in marriage of her numerous friends and acquaintances.

# The Tapis Vert of Versailles.

EVERY one knows and admires the magnificent carpet of verdure spread by the elegant hand of Lenotre in the gardens of Versailles; that long, smooth grass-plot, whose flowery borders fringe the steps of the Grand Terrace and the margin of the Apollo Basin. Lenotre's tapis-vert, which in bygone times was trodden only by the delicate feet of the beauties of the Court of the "Grand Monarque," is now the summer evening resort of all the *petits bourgeois* and *rentiers* of Versailles. The soldiers of the garrison, and the nursery-maids in the service of the neighboring families, have succeeded to the celebrated warriors and illustrious beauties of former days. The pages of Louis XIV. are represented by the gamins of the Seine et Oise, and Madame's charming maids-of-honor have given place to the finely dressed wives and daughters of the tradesmen of the Avenue de Paris.

Two centuries ago, at the date of the little story about to be related, the Tapis Vert was the afternoon resort of all the rank, beauty, and talent—all the royalty of monarchical France. After some time passed in chatting and promenading, the gay assemblage was wont to disperse, and

forming little scattered groups, would retire into the grottoes and bosquets, or wander through the labyrinthian paths of the enchanting gardens. Louis XIV. sauntered up and down, in all the pomp of his self-complacent dignity, side by side with Mansard, who had raised the graceful structure of the palace—with Lebrun, who had adorned it with his pencil's magic art—with Girardon and Le Puget, whose chisels had imparted almost breathing life to the deities, nymphs, and graces of the heathen mythology—or with Colbert, the bold agent of royal enterprises, ever ready to receive or to impart a sublime idea.

Statesmen and generals usually collected together in some remote corner of the regal domain. One of their favorite haunts was the "Cent Marches," which possibly to their frequent presence owes its name of "Escalier des Géans." Beaux-esprits, poets, artists, and other *profane thinkers*, loved to chat together in the orangery, amidst the flowers and perfume of sunny Provence.

The reverend guests of the royal master of Versailles, consisting of dignitaries of the church and eloquent preachers, slowly paced up and down the famous *Allée des Philosophes*, where Bossuet and his friends discussed important affairs, temporal as well as spiritual. In fine, of all the brilliant court of Louis Quatorze, there remained on the Tapis Vert, at a certain hour in the evening, only the officers of the household, the King's pages, and Madame's maids-of-honor.

Now for a glimpse at the innocent pastimes of the noble demoiselles of that age. Let it not be supposed that Madame's maids-of-honor invariably employed their evenings in flirting with the gay cavaliers of the Court, or in keeping love assignations in the shady bosquets of the gardens! By no means; they often took pleasure in diversions of a much more childish character. For example—they were all as-

sembled one evening on the Tapis Vert, trying who among them could accomplish the feat of walking blindfold from one end of the grass-plot to the other, without deviating either to the right or to the left—without approaching the lateral gravel walks, or touching the flowery borders at either end. The perseverance with which they endeavored to accomplish this undertaking was almost inconceivable. Though each successively failed in the trial, yet with unflagging spirit they over and over again commenced the tedious and difficult task, while every renewed attempt left the problem of the *straight-line* still unsolved.

One of the young ladies—the loveliest of all the fair group—was resolutely bent on accomplishing the apparent impossibility. This was Louise de Navarre; she had vowed she would succeed, were it only for the sake of taunting her companions on their failure; and as she possessed as much pride, vanity, and wilfulness, as ever fell to the lot of any daughter of Eve, she made it a point of honor to accomplish her vow, though its fulfilment would have been nothing short of a miracle. Nevertheless, she failed as well as the rest. Her footsteps, though guided by the most careful calculation, continually diverged from the right line, and the disappointed young lady was saluted with the scoffs and jeers of her laughing companions.

Mdlle de Navarre tore the handkerchief from her eyes with an air of mortified pride; then turning to the newly created Bishop of Condom, who was standing at a little distance and gazing at her with an expression of sadness mingled with regret—"Monseigneur," said she, "doubtless your wisdom can throw light on this mystery. Pardon my ignorance, Monseigneur, and pray explain to me why it is impossible to do a thing apparently so easy as to walk blindfold in a straight line from one end of the Tapis Vert to the other."

"Mademoiselle de Navarre," replied Bossuet, in a low tone of voice,—"when a lady is young, beautiful, and indiscreet, she should not venture to walk on the Tapis Vert, or any other carpet at Court, either with a bandage on her eyes or a passion in her heart."

"Why not?"

"Because she is likely to move at hazard—to deviate from the right line—perhaps to fall, never to rise again."

"Your pardon, Monseigneur; I do not understand you."

"Louise," pursued the dignitary, in a tone expressive of the kindest feeling, "come with me to the terrace; I have something to say to you. Shall I offend you if I call back to your recollection a story which may, perhaps, be interesting to you? Some day or other you will, I hope, thank me for having directed your thoughts to it."

"Speak, Monseigneur; I shall listen with profound attention," said Louise, as she followed Bossuet up the steps of the terrace.

"Mademoiselle," resumed the Bishop, "the story I am about to narrate to you is of recent date. Only a very short time ago, a young lady of noble birth and great beauty came from her retired provincial home, to be presented at the Court of Versailles, in quality of maid-of-honor to the English Princess recently united to *Monsieur*, his Majesty's brother."

"You allude to Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

"No; but, like Mademoiselle de la Vallière, the lady's name is Louise—I speak of Louise de Navarre."

"Of me!" exclaimed the young lady, coloring deeply, and hanging down her head. Bossuet, without heeding her confusion, thus continued—

"At the happy time when I first had the honor of knowing Mdlle Louise de Navarre in the quiet home of her mother, she was no more than fifteen years of age. Though

richly endowed with talent and beauty, she was even less remarkable for those qualities than for excellence of heart, and above all for devout piety. In the habits of her mundane life, Louise might be said to be at once proud and humble. She was indulgent to every one; severe only to herself and her own faults. Her manners were natural and unaffected; her dress, simple and elegant. She was devout, without hypocrisy; witty, without ill-nature; charitable, without ostentation; liberal, without prodigality. In short, she was a young lady whom I looked upon as nearly approaching to mortal perfection!"

"You judge me too favorably, Monseigneur."

"Stay, Louise, hear me out; I have not yet said all. Notwithstanding these excellent qualities, Louise had two great faults, which seldom fall to the lot of young women of her age, and least of all when they are poor and pious. Those faults were towering pride and boundless ambition!"

"Oh! Monseigneur, spare me!"

"You said just now, I judged you too favorably! But hear me to an end. One evening, the courtly circle assembled in Madame's drawing-room were listening to one of the company, who was reading aloud some passages from the writings of the prince of Latin poets. At every pause of the reader, Louise gave utterance to her admiration of the marvellous beauties of a text which she was not expected to understand. At length, the reader, laying down the book, and turning to the fair admirer of Virgil, pretended to express astonishment at her perfect knowledge of the Latin tongue. 'Oh!' replied Louise, in a tone which plainly betrayed offended vanity, 'I have not understood all you read; but what I did not understand, I guessed!'"

"I do not remember the circumstance, Monseigneur."

"Then I have done well to remind you of it. There is another little incident which I am desirous of recalling

to your memory. One day the learned M. d'Hozier had the courage to tell Louise (whether in jest or earnest, it matters not) that her family was neither very ancient nor very distinguished."

"Well," replied the ambitious lady, "if I am not great, I must try to rise—and I *will* rise!"

There a brief pause intervened, and then Bossuet continued as follows:—

"Among the visitors who used to be most constant in their attendance at the little, quiet, unpretending parties given by the Countess de Navarre, there was a gentleman, very rich, but very plain in person. He was not then young; but in his earlier days he had been celebrated for extravagance and dissipation. The frivolous, coxcombical, and irreligious Marquis de Lansac loved to draw upon the recollections of his past life for the sake of describing love adventures and duels, or repeating profane jokes and heresies. But in spite of all this, the Marquis had some good points—he was at bottom warm-hearted and generous."

"Quite true, Monseigneur."

"Then you have not forgotten him—so much the better! Doubtless the Marquis de Lansac, with all his vanity, was conscious of his personal disadvantages, and he thought to conceal them beneath the mask of borrowed vices and silly impertinences. Strange to say, he took pains to make his character appear even more ill-favored than his face.

"Such was the first adorer—or, I should rather say, the first admirer of Mdlle de Navarre. The lady was pleased with this admiration, and within the space of a few months a complete metamorphosis was observable in the Marquis de Lansac. He became exceedingly assiduous in his attentions to the young lady. He was always respectful, always gallant; sometimes tender, even to weakness. He now conversed like a man who loved morality, but who had

not the courage to practise it. He spoke of virtue as of a consolatory tradition which he had once known and forgotten, and which he was trying to recall. He spoke of religion as of a sacred ark, which he might worship at a distance, but dared not venture to approach. When he alluded to the dangerous follies of his past life, it was only to pronounce commendation on reason and prudence. In short, the sinner appeared transformed to a saint, when the Marquis de Lansac knelt at the feet of Mdlle de Navarre, rendering homage to religion, virtue, and discretion.

"One morning, when on the point of returning to the Court of France, the Marquis called to take leave of the Countess de Navarre. On entering the door the servants informed him that, only an hour previously, that venerable lady had breathed her last.

"Some months after this event, the orphan Louise appeared at the Court of Louis XIV., under the generous auspices of her ardent friend, the Marquis de Lansac. Through his influence, she was speedily attached to the household of *Madame*. She had said she would rise, and become great . . . . she kept her fatal vow . . . . she did rise."

"But I am yet very lowly, Monseigneur."

"One day, Louis XIV., on entering the Royal chapel, beheld for the first time one of the maids-of-honor of *Madame*, whose beauty appeared to him to eclipse that of all the ladies of the Court of Versailles. This was no other than Louise de Navarre, whom Madame de Montespan, only a short time previously, had sought to condemn to the penalty of ridicule, by surnaming her *Une Statue de Provence* . . . . little thinking how soon a capricious ray of royal sunshine might warm and animate the beauteous statue. But so it happened; and in a very brief space of time the Marquis de Lansac found a rival . . . . a redoubtable rival, in our Royal Master, Louis XIV!"

"A rival in his Majesty!"

"Yes, you well know it, Mademoiselle; therefore why dissemble and interrupt me?

"The charms of Louise de Navarre recalled to the sovereign's heart the touching graces of Louise de la Vallière; and that tender remembrance doubtless had its effect in augmenting the fascinating influence of the new maid of honor.

"Next day, the Marquis de Lansac received notice to depart on a diplomatic mission to Spain. He took leave of his Majesty with no very good grace, and with but little gratitude for the mark of Royal confidence conferred upon him .... From that time, the king's passion was no longer a secret .... and there was little reason to doubt that the religion and the virtue of Mademoiselle de Navarre would speedily yield to the suit of her Royal lover.

"In the absence of the Marquis de Lansac a devoted friend, an honest man, a priest of the Court, ventured to address to the young lady the language of truth, at which the futile passions of this world sometimes take alarm. He unfolded to her eyes the dark spectacle of the future.—Louise, if it will gratify capricious vanity to become the queen of a day, you may possess a power which will last no longer than a dream; you may have friends equally fleeting, and enemies of more permanent endurance; you may have a courtly train of attendants, and live in regal splendor for a brief time; you may have horses, carriages, servants, and guards; but you will have the hatred and mockery of the court, and contempt of all honorable persons; and some time or other, Louise, under the influence of one of those sudden revelations with which God visits us for our salvation, mysterious voices will in turn whisper to you—'I am thy Father.—Where is my name?' 'I am thy Mother.—Where is my honor?' 'I am thy Betrothed.—

Where are thy vows?' 'I am Conscience.—Where is thy virtue?' And finally the solemn voice of Religion will say —'Hast thou forgotten thy God?'"

"Reverend father," exclaimed Louise, throwing herself on her knees before the prelate, "thanks—thanks for this kind admonition .... I again behold the light of heaven! I am humbled .... I am penitent. Henceforth let me forsake the Court .... let me renounce my culpable ambition and my foolish hopes .... Yes, I now feel myself worthy of your friendship. Conduct me hence, Monseigneur!"

"Whither would you go?"

"To the Carmelites—to join my sister, Louise de la Misericorde."

"Be it so," resumed Bossuet; "for God is with you!"

Louise de Navarre retired to the convent of Mademoiselle de la Vallière. The ceremony of her profession took place in the presence of all the assembled Court of Louis XIV. The Queen of France presented to her the black veil, and Bossuet delivered the sermon. After that day, doubtless the two Louises—the two sisters of la Misericorde —sometimes meditated, the one on what she had been, and the other on what she had escaped being.

In after years, if Bossuet happened to see a giddy beauty of the Court groping her way blindfold over the *Tapis Vert* of Versailles, he used to think of Mademoiselle de Navarre, and would murmur to himself—"Heaven forgive her .... she is on her way to the Carmelites!"

# The White Lace Bonnet.

Yet no enthusiast of the pastoral or romantic school, no fair reader, with eyes "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue," sneer at the title of my paper. I have written it after much and mature meditation.

It is about two years since I was one of that strange and busy mob of some five hundred people, who were assembled on the platform in the Euston-square station a few minutes previous to the starting of the morning mail-train for Birmingham. To the unoccupied observer the scene might have been an amusing one—the little domestic incidents of leave-taking and embracing—the careful looking after luggage and parcels—the watchful anxieties for a lost cloak, or a stray carpet-bag, blending with the affectionate farewells of parting, are all curious; while the studious preparations for comfort of the old gentleman in the *coupé*, oddly contrast with similar arrangements on a more limited scale by the poor soldier's wife in the third-class carriage.

Small as the segment of humanity is, it is a type of the great world to which it belongs.

I sauntered carelessly along the boarded terrace, in-

vestigating, by the light of the guard's lantern, the inmates of the different carriages—and, calling to my assistance my tact as a physiognomist as to what party I should select for my fellow-passengers—"not in there, assuredly," said I to myself, as I saw the aquiline noses and dark eyes of two Hamburgh Jews; "nor here, either—I cannot stand a day in a nursery; nor will this party suit me, that old gentleman is snoring already;" and so I walked on until at last I bethought me of an empty carriage, as at least possessing negative benefits, since positive ones were denied me. Scarcely had the churlish determination seized me, when the glare of the light fell upon the side of a bonnet of white lace, through whose transparent texture a singularly lovely profile could be seen. Features, purely Greek in their character, tinged with a most delicate color, were defined by a dark mass of hair, worn in a deep band along the cheek almost to the chin. There was a sweetness—a look of guileless innocence in the character of the face, which, even by the flitting light of the lantern, struck me strongly. I made the guard halt, and peeped into the carriage as if seeking for a friend. By the uncertain flickering, I could detect the figure of a man, apparently a young one, by the lady's side; the carriage had no other traveller. "This will do," thought I, as I opened the door, and took my place on the opposite side.

The little lamp which hung aloft, gave me but slight opportunity of prosecuting my favorite study on this occasion. All that I could trace, was the outline of a young and delicately-formed girl, enveloped in a cachmere shawl —a slight and inadequate muffling for the road at such a season. The gentleman at her side was attired in what seemed a dress-coat, nor was he provided with any other defence against the cold of the morning.

Scarcely had I ascertained these two facts, when the lamp

flared, flickered, and went out, leaving me to speculate on these vague but yet remarkable traits in the couple before me. "What can they be?" "who are they?" "where do they come from?" "where are they going?" were all questions which naturally presented themselves to me in turn; yet every inquiry resolved itself into the one, "why has she not a cloak? why has not he got a Petersham?" Long and patiently did I discuss these points with myself, and framed numerous hypotheses to account for the circumstance—but still with comparatively little satisfaction, as objections presented themselves to each conclusion; and although, in turn, I had made him a runaway clerk from Coutts's, a Liverpool actor, a member of the swell-mob, and a bagman—yet I could not, for the life of me, include *her* in the category of such an individual's companions. Neither spoke, so that from their voices, that best of all tests, nothing could be learned.

Wearied by my doubts, and worried by the interruption to my sleep the early rising necessitated, I fell soon into a sound doze, lulled by the soothing "strains" a locomotive so eminently is endowed with.

"Bang, bang, bang," said I aloud, repeating this infernal "refrain," and with an energy that made my two fellow-travellers burst out laughing. This awakened me from my sleep, and enabled me to throw off the fearful incubus which rested on my bosom; so strongly, however, was the image of my dream—so vivid the picture my mind had conjured up—and stranger than all, so perfect was the memory of the demoniac song, that I could not help relating the whole vision, and repeating for my companions the words, as I have here done for the reader. As I proceeded in my narrative, I had ample time to observe the couple before me. The lady, for it is but suitable to begin with her, was young, she could scarcely have been more

than twenty—and looked, by the broad daylight, even handsomer than by the glare of the guard's lantern; she was slight, but as well as I could observe, her figure was very gracefully formed, and with a decided air of elegance, detectable even in the ease and repose of her attitude. Her dress was of pale blue silk, around the collar of which she wore a profusion of rich lace, of what peculiar loom I am, unhappily, unable to say—nor would I allude to the circumstance, save, that it formed one of the most embarrassing problems in my efforts at divining her rank and condition; never was there such a travelling costume, and although it suited perfectly the frail and delicate beauty of the wearer, it ill accorded with the dingy "conveniency" in which we journeyed—even to her shoes and stockings, for I noticed these—the feet were perfect—and gloves; all the details of her dress had a freshness and propriety one rarely or never sees encountering the wear and tear of the road.

The young gentleman at her side—for he, too, was scarcely more than five-and-twenty at most—was also attired in a costume as little like that of a traveller—a dress-coat and evening waistcoat, over which a profusion of chains were festooned in that mode so popular in our day, showed that he certainly, in arranging his costume, had other thoughts than of wasting such attractions on the desert air of a railroad journey. He was a good-looking young fellow, with that mixture of frankness and careless ease the youth of England so eminently possess, in contradistinction to the young men of other countries; his manner and voice both attested that he belonged to a good class; and the general courtesy of his demeanor showed one who had lived in society. While he evinced an evident desire to enter into conversation and amuse his companion, there was still an appearance of agitation and incerti-

tude about him which showed that his mind was wandering very far from the topic before him. More than once he checked himself in the midst of some casual merriment, and became suddenly grave—while, from time to time, he whispered to the young lady, with an appearance of anxiety and eagerness, all his endeavors could not effectually conceal. She, too, seemed agitated—but I thought less so than he; it might be, however, that from the habitual quietude of her manner the traits of emotion were less detectable by a stranger.

* * * * * *

We were alone then once more, but somehow the interval which had occurred had chilled the warm current of our intercourse; perhaps, too, the effects of a long day's journey were telling on us all, and we felt that indisposition to converse which steals over even the most habitual traveller towards the close of a day on the road. Partly from these causes, and more strongly still from my dislike to obtrude conversation upon those whose minds were evidently pre-occupied, I, too, lay back in my seat and indulged my own reflections in silence. I had sat some time thus, I know not exactly how long, when the voice of the young lady struck on my ear; it was one of those sweet, tinkling, silver sounds which somehow when heard, however slightly, have the effect at once to dissipate the dull routine of one's own thoughts, and suggest others more relative to the speaker.

"Had you not better ask him?" said she; "I am sure he can tell you."

The youth apparently demurred, while she insisted the more, and at length, as if yielding to her entreaty, he suddenly turned towards me and said—

"I'm a perfect stranger here, and would feel obliged if you could inform me which is the best hotel in Liverpool?"

He made a slight pause, and added, "I mean a quiet, family hotel."

"I rarely stop in the town myself," replied I; "but when I do, to breakfast or dine, I take the Adelphi; I'm sure you will find it very comfortable."

They again conversed for a few moments together, and the young man, with an appearance of some hesitation, said, "Do you mean to go there now, sir?"

"Yes," said I, "my intention is to take a hasty dinner before I start in the steamer for Ireland; I see by my watch I shall have ample time to do so, as we shall arrive full half an hour before our time."

Another pause, and another discussion ensued, the only words which I could catch from the young lady being, "I'm certain he will have no objection."

Conceiving that these referred to myself, and guessing at their probable import, I immediately said—"If you will allow me to be your guide, I shall feel most happy to show you the way; we can obtain a carriage at the station and proceed thither at once."

I was right in my surmise—both parties were profuse in their acknowledgments—the young man avowing that it was the very request he was about to make when I anticipated him. We arrived in due time at the station, and having assisted my new acquaintances to alight—I found little difficulty in placing them in a carriage, for luggage they had none, neither portmanteau nor carpet-bag—not even a dressing-case—a circumstance at which, however I might have endeavored to avoid expressing my wonder, they seemed to feel required an explanation at their hands; both looked confused and abashed—nor was it until by busying myself in the details of my own baggage, that I was enabled to relieve them from the embarrassment the circumstance occasioned.

"Here we are," said I; "this is the Adelphi," as we stopped at that comfortable and hospitable portal, through which the fumes of brown gravy and ox-tail floated with a savory odor, as pleasant to him who enters with dinner intentions, as it is tantalizing to the listless wanderer without.

The lady thanked me with a smile, as I handed her into the house, and a very sweet smile too, and one I could have fancied the young man would have felt a little jealous of, if I had not seen the ten times more fascinating one she bestowed on him.

The young man acknowledged my slight service with thanks, and made a half gesture to shake hands at parting, which, though a failure, I rather liked, as evidencing, even in its awkwardness, a kindness of disposition; for so it is—gratitude smacks poorly when expressed in trim and measured phrase—it seems not the natural coinage of the heart, when the impression betrays too clearly the mint of the mind.

"Good-bye," said I, as I watched their retiring figures up the wide staircase. "She's devilish pretty—and what a good figure—I did not think any other than a French woman could adjust her shawl in that fashion." And with these very soothing reflections I betook myself to the coffee-room, and soon was very deep in discussing the distinctive merits of mulligatawny, mock-turtle, and mutton-chops, or listening to that everlasting pæan every waiter in England sings in praise of the "joint."

In all the luxury of my own little table, with my own little salt-cellar, my own cruet-stand, my beer-glass, and its younger brother for wine, I sat awaiting the arrival of my fare, and puzzling my brain as to the unknown travellers.

My thoughts turned at once to their old track. "I have it," said I, as a bloody-minded suggestion shot through

my brain. "This is an affair of charcoal and oxalic acid—this is some damnable device of arsenic or sugar-of-lead—these young wretches have come down here to poison themselves, and be smothered in that mode latterly introduced among us. There will be a double-locked door and a smell of carbonic gas through the key-hole in the morning. I have it all before me, even to the maudlin letter, with its twenty-one verses of bad poetry at the foot of it. I think I hear the coroner's charge, and see the three shillings and eight pence half-penny produced before the jury, that were found in the youth's possession, together with a small key and a bill for a luncheon at Birmingham. By Jove, I will prevent it though; I will spoil their fun this time; if they will have physic, let them have something just as nauseous, but not so injurious. My own notion is a basin of this soup and a slice of 'the joint,' and here it comes;" and thus my meditations were again destined to be cut short, and reverie give way to reality.

I was just helping myself to my second slice of mutton, when the young man entered the coffee-room, and walked towards me. At first, his manner evinced hesitation and indicision, and he turned to the fire-place, as if with some change of purpose, then, as if suddenly summoning his resolution, he came up to the table at which I sat, and said—

"Will you favor me with five minutes of your time?"

"By all means," said I, "sit down here, and I'm your man; you must excuse me, though, if I proceed with my dinner, as I see it is past six o'clock, and the packet sails at seven."

"Pray, proceed," replied he, "your doing so will in part excuse the liberty I take, in obtruding myself upon you."

He paused, and although I waited for him to resume, he appeared in no humor to do so, but seemed more confused than before.

"Hang it," said he at length, "I am a very bungling negotiator, and never, in my life, could manage a matter of any difficulty."

"Take a glass of sherry," said I; "try if that may not assist to recall your faculties."

"No, no," cried he, "I have taken a bottle of it already, and, by Jove, I rather think my head is only the more addled. Do you know that I am in a most confounded scrape? I have run away with that young lady; we were at an evening party last night together, and came straight away from the supper-table to the train."

"Indeed!" said I, laying down my knife and fork, not a little gratified that I was at length to learn the secret that had so long teazed me. "And so you have run away with her!"

"Yes; it was no sudden thought, however—at least, it was an old attachment; I have known her these two months."

"Oh! oh!" said I; "then there was prudence in the affair."

"Perhaps you will say so," said he, quickly, "when I tell you she has £30,000 in the Funds, and something like £1,700 a year besides—not that I care a straw for the money—but in the eye of the world that kind of thing has its *éclat*."

"So it has," said I, "and a very pretty *éclat* it is, and one that, somehow or another, preserves its attractions much longer than most surprises; but I do not see the scrape after all."

"I am coming to that," said he, glancing timidly around the room. "The affair occurred this wise: we were at an evening party—a kind of *dejeuner*, it was, on the Thames—Charlotte came with her aunt—a shrewish old damsel, that has no love for me: in fact, she very soon saw my game, and resolved to thwart it. Well, of course, I was obliged

to be most circumspect, and did not venture to approach her, not even to ask her to dance, the whole evening. As it grew late, however, I either became more courageous or less cautious, and I did ask her for a waltz. The old lady bristled up at once, and asked for her shawl. Charlotte accepted my invitation, and said she would certainly not retire so early; and I, to cut the matter short, led her to the top of the room. We waltzed together, and then had a galoppe, and after that some champagne, and then another waltz; for Charlotte was resolved to give the old lady a lesson—she has spirit for anything! Well, it was growing late by this time, and we went in search of the aunt at last; but, by Jove! she was not to be found. We hunted everywhere for her, looked well in every corner of the supper-room, where it was most likely we should discover her; and at length, to our mutual horror and dismay, we learned, that she had ordered her carriage up a full hour before, and gone off, declaring that she would send Charlotte's father to fetch her home, as she herself possessed no influence over her. Here was a pretty business—the old gentleman being, as Charlotte often told me, the most choleric man in England. He had killed two brother officers in duels, and narrowly escaped being hanged at Maidstone for shooting a waiter who delayed bringing him hot water to shave—a pleasant old boy to encounter on such an occasion as this!

"'He will certainly shoot me—he will shoot you—he will kill us both!" were the only words she could utter; and my blood actually froze at the prospect before us. You may smile if you like; but let me tell you, that an outraged father, with a pair of patent revolving pistols, is no laughing matter. There was nothing for it, then, but to 'bolt.' She saw that as soon as I did; and although she endeavored to persuade me to suffer her to return home alone, that, you know, I never could think of; and so, after

some little demurrings, some tears, and some resistance, we got to the Euston-square station, just as the train was going. You may easily think that neither of us had much time for preparation. As for myself, I have come away with a ten pound note in my purse, not a shilling more have I in my possession, and here we are now, half of the sum spent already, and how we are to get on to the north, I cannot, for the life of me, conceive."

"Oh! that's it," said I, peering at him shrewdly from under my eyelids.

"Yes, that's it; don't you think it is bad enough?" and he spoke the words with a reckless frankness that satisfied all my scruples. "I ought to tell you," said he, "that my name is Blunden. I am a lieutenant in the Buffs, on leave; and now that you know my secret, will you lend me twenty pounds? which, perhaps, may be enough to carry us forward—at least, it will do, until it will be safe for me to write for money."

"But what would bring you to the north," said I; "why not put yourselves on board the mail-packet this evening, and come to Dublin? We will marry you there just as cheaply; pursuit of you will be just as difficult; and, I'd venture to say, you might choose a worse land for the honeymoon."

"But I have no money," said he; "you forget that."

"For the matter of money," said I, "make your mind easy. If the young lady is going away with her own consent—if, indeed, she is as anxious to get married as you are, make me the banker, and I'll give her away, be the bride's-maid, or anything else you please."

"You are a trump," said he, helping himself to another glass of my sherry; and then filling out a third, which emptied the bottle, he slapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Here's your health; now come up-stairs."

"Stop a moment," said I, "I must see her alone—there must be no tampering with the evidence."

He hesitated for a second, and surveyed me from head to foot, and whether it was the number of my double chins or the rotundity of my waistcoat divested his mind of any jealous scruples, but he smiled coolly, and said, "So you shall, old buck—we will never quarrel about that."

Up-stairs we went accordingly, and into a handsome drawing-room on the first floor, at one end of which, with her head buried in her hands, the young lady was sitting.

"Charlotte," said he, "this gentleman is kind enough to take an interest in our fortunes, but he desires a few words with you alone."

I waved my hand to him to prevent his making any further explanation, and as a signal to withdraw—he took the hint and left the room.

Now, thought I, this is the second act of the drama—what the deuce am I to do here! In the first place, some might deem it my duty to admonish the young damsel on the impropriety of the step, to draw an afflicting picture of her family, to make her weep bitter tears, and end by persuading her to take a first-class ticket in the up-train. This would be the grand parento-moral line, and I shame to confess it, it was never my forte. Secondly, I might pursue the inquiry suggested by myself, and ascertain her real sentiments. This might be called the amico-auxiliary line. Or, lastly, I might try a little what might be done on my own score, and not see £30,000 and £1,700 a year squandered by a cigar-smoking lieutenant in the Buffs. As there may be different opinions about this line, I shall not give it a name. Suffice it to say, that, notwithstanding a sly peep at as pretty a throat and as well-rounded an instep as ever tempted a "government Mercury," I was true to my trust, and opened the negotiation on the honest footing.

"Do you love him, my little darling?" said I; for somehow consolation always struck me as own-brother to love-making. It is like endorsing a bill for a friend, which, though he tells you he'll meet, you always feel responsible for the money.

She turned upon me an arch look. By St. Patrick, I half regretted I had not tried number three, as, in the sweetest imaginable voice, she said—

"Do you doubt it?"

I wish I could, thought I to myself. No matter, it was too late for regrets, and so I ascertained, in a very few minutes, that she corroborated every portion of the statement, and was as deeply interested in the success of the adventure as himself.

"That will do," said I. "He is a lucky fellow—I always heard the Buffs were;" and with that I descended to the coffee-room, where the young man awaited me with the greatest anxiety.

"Are you satisfied?" cried he, as I entered the room.

"Perfectly," was my answer. "And now let us lose no more time; it wants but a quarter to seven, and we must be on board in ten minutes."

As I have already remarked, my fellow-travellers were not burdened with luggage, so there was little difficulty in expediting their departure; and in half an hour from that time we were gliding down the Mersey, and gazing on the spangled lamps which glittered over the great city of soap, sugar, and sassafras, train-oil, timber, and tallow. The young lady soon went below, as the night was chilly; but Blunden and myself walked the deck until near twelve o'clock, chatting over whatever came uppermost, and giving me an opportunity to perceive that, without possessing any remarkable ability or cleverness, he was one of those off-hand, candid, clear-headed young fellows, who, when

trained in the admirable discipline of the mess, become the excellent specimens of well conducted, well mannered gentlemen our army abounds with.

We arrived in due course in Dublin. I took my friends up to Morrison's, drove with them after breakfast to a fashionable milliner's, where the young lady, with an admirable taste, selected such articles of dress as she cared for, and I then saw them duly married. I do not mean to say that the ceremony was performed by a bishop, or that a royal duke gave her away; neither can I state that the train of carriages comprised the equipages of the leading nobility. I only vouch for the fact that a little man, with a black eye and a sinister countenance, read a ceremony of his own composing, and made them write their names in a great book, and pay thirty shillings for his services; after which I put a fifty-pound note into Blunden's hand, saluted the bride, and, wishing them every health and happiness, took my leave.

They started at once with four posters for the north, intending to cross over to Scotland. My engagements induced me to leave town for Cork, and in less than a fortnight I found at my club a letter from Blunden, inclosing the fifty pounds, with a thousand thanks for my prompt kindness, and innumerable affectionate reminiscences from Madame. They were as happy as———confound it, every one is happy for a week or a fortnight, so I crushed the letter—pitched it into the fire—was rather pleased with myself for what I had done, and thought no more of the whole transaction.

Here then my tale should have an end, and the moral is obvious. Indeed I am not certain but some may prefer it to that which the succeeding portion conveys, thinking that the codicil revokes the body of the testament. However that may be, here goes for it.

It was about a year after this adventure, that I made one of a party of six, travelling up to London by the "Grand Junction." The company were chatty, pleasant folk, and the conversation, as often happens among utter strangers, became anecdotic; many good stories were told in turn, and many pleasant comments made on them, when at length it occurred to me to mention the somewhat singular rencontre I have already narrated, as having happened to myself.

"Strange enough," said I, "the last time I journeyed along this line, nearly this time last year, a very remarkable occurrence took place. I happened to fall in with a young officer of the Buffs, eloping with an exceedingly pretty girl; she had a large fortune, and was in every respect a 'catch;' he ran away with her from an evening party, and never remembered until he arrived at Liverpool, that he had no money for the journey. In this dilemma, the young fellow, rather spooney about the whole thing, I think would have gone quietly back by the next train, but, by Jove, I couldn't satisfy my conscience that so lovely a girl should be treated in such a manner. I rallied his courage, took him over to Ireland in the packet, and got them married next morning."

"Have I caught you at last, you old meddling scoundrel?" cried a voice, hoarse and discordant with passion, from the opposite side, and at the same instant a short, thick-set old man, with shoulders like a Hercules, sprang at me; with one hand he clutched me by the throat, and with the other he pummelled my head against the panel of the conveyance, and with such violence, that many people in the next carriage averred that they thought we had run into the down train. So sudden was the old wretch's attack, and so infuriate withal, it took the united force of the other passengers to detach him from my neck; and even then, as

they drew him off, he kicked at me like a demon. Never has it been my lot to witness such an outbreak of wrath; and indeed, were I to judge from the symptoms it occasioned, the old fellow had better not repeat it, or assuredly apoplexy would follow.

"That villain—that old ruffian," said he, glaring at me with flashing eye-balls, while he menaced me with his closed fist, "that cursed, meddling scoundrel is the cause of the greatest calamity of my life."

"Are you her father, then?" articulated I faintly, for a misgiving came over me that my boasted benevolence might prove a mistake. "Are you her father?" The words were not out, when he dashed at me once more, and were it not for the watchfulness of the others, inevitably had finished me.

"I've heard of you, my old buck," said I, affecting a degree of ease and security my heart sadly belied. "I've heard of your dreadful temper already—I know you can't control yourself. I know all about the waiter at Maidstone. By Jove, they did not wrong you, and I am not surprised at your poor daughter leaving you"—but he would not suffer me to conclude, and once more his wrath boiled over, and all the efforts of the others were barely sufficient to calm him into a semblance of reason.

There would be no end to my narrative if I endeavored to convey to my reader the scene which followed, or recount the various outbreaks of passion, which ever and anon interrupted the old man, and induced him to diverge into sundry little byways of lamentation over his misfortune, and curses upon my meddling interference. Indeed his whole narrative was conducted more in the staccato style of an Italian opera father, than in the homely wrath of an English parent. The wind-up of these dissertations being always to the one purpose, as with a look of scowling passion, directed towards me, he said:—

"Only wait till we reach the station, and see if I won't do for you."

His tale in a few words amounted to this. He was the Squire Blunden—the father of the lieutenant in the "Buffs." The youth had formed an attachment to a lady, whom he had accidentally met in a Margate steamer. The circumstances of her family and fortune were communicated to him in confidence by herself, and although she expressed her conviction of the utter impossibility of obtaining her father's consent to any untitled match, she as resolutely refused to elope with him. The result, however, was as we have seen; she did elope—was married—they made a wedding tour in the Highlands, and returned to Blunden-Hall two months after, where the old gentleman welcomed them with affection and forgiveness. About a fortnight after their return, it was deemed necessary to make inquiry as to the circumstances of her estate and funded property, when the young lady fell upon her knees—wept bitterly and said she had not a sixpence—that the whole thing was a "rouse;" that she paid five pounds for a choleric father, three, ten, for an aunt, warranted to wear "satin;" in fact, that she had been twice married before, and had heavy misgivings that the husbands were still living.

There was nothing left for it but compromise.

"I gave her," said he, "five hundred pounds to go to the devil, and I registered the same day a solemn oath, that if I ever met the same Tramp, he should carry the impress of my knuckles on his face to the day of his death."

The train reached Harrow as the old gentleman spoke. I waited until it was again in motion, and flinging wide the door, I sprang out, and from that day to this have strictly avoided forming acquaintances with a white lace bonnet, even at a distance, or ever befriending a lieutenant in the Buffs.

# The First and Last Dinner.

TWELVE friends, much about the same age, and fixed by their pursuits, their family connexions, and other local interests, as permanent inhabitants of the metropolis, agreed, one day when they were drinking their wine at the Star and Garter at Richmond, to institute an annual dinner among themselves, under the following regulations: That they should dine alternately at each other's houses on the *first* and *last* day of the year; that the *first* bottle of wine uncorked at the *first* dinner, should be recorked and put away, to be drunk by him who should be the *last* of their number; that they should never admit a new member; that when one died, eleven should meet, and when another died, ten should meet, and so on; and that when only one remained, he should on those two days dine by himself, and sit the usual hours at his solitary table; but the *first* time he so dined alone, lest it should be the only one, he should then uncork the *first* bottle, and, in the *first* glass, drink to the memory of all who were gone.

There was something original and whimsical in the idea, and it was eagerly embraced. They were all in the prime

of life, closely attached by reciprocal friendship, fond of social enjoyments, and looked forward to their future meetings with unalloyed anticipations of pleasure. The only thought, indeed, that could have darkened those anticipations was one not very likely to intrude itself at this moment, that of the helpless wight who was destined to uncork the *first* bottle at his lonely repast.

It was high summer when this frolic compact was entered into; and as their pleasure-yacht skimmed along the dark bosom of the Thames, on their return to London, they talked of nothing but their *first* and *last* feasts of ensuing years. Their imaginations ran riot with a thousand gay predictions of festive merriment. They wantoned in conjectures of what changes time would operate; joked each other upon their appearance when they should meet, —some hobbling upon crutches after a severe fit of the gout,—others poking about with purblind eyes, which even spectacles could hardly enable to distinguish the alderman's walk in a haunch of venison,—some with portly round bellies and tidy little brown wigs, and others decently dressed out in a new suit of mourning for the death of a great-grand-daughter or a great-grand-son. Palsies, wrinkles, toothless gums, stiff hams, and poker knees, were bandied about in sallies of exuberant mirth, and appropriated, first to one and then to another, as a group of merry children would have distributed golden palaces, flying chariots, diamond tables, and chairs of solid pearl, under the fancied possession of a magician's wand which could transform plain brick and timber, and humble mahogany into such costly treasures.

"As for you, George," exclaimed one of the twelve, addressing his brother-in-law, "I expect I shall see you as dry, withered, and shrunken as an old eel-skin, you mere outside of a man!" and he accompanied the words with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

George Fortescue was leaning carelessly over the side of the yacht, laughing the loudest of any at the conversation which had been carried on. The sudden manual salutation of his brother-in-law threw him off his balance, and in a moment he was overboard. They heard the heavy splash of his fall before they could be said to have seen him fall. The yacht was proceeding swiftly along; but it was instantly stopped.

The utmost consternation now prevailed. It was nearly dark, but Fortescue was known to be an excellent swimmer, and startling as the accident was, they felt certain he would regain the vessel. They could not see him. They listened. They heard the sound of his hands and feet. They hailed him. An answer was returned, but in a faint gurgling voice, and the exclamation "Oh, God!" struck upon their ears. In an instant two or three, who were expert swimmers, plunged into the river, and swam towards the spot whence the exclamation had proceeded. One of them was within an arm's length of Fortescue: he saw him; he was struggling and buffeting the water; before he could be reached, he went down, and his distracted friend beheld the eddying circles of the wave just over the spot where he had sunk. He dived after him, and touched the bottom; but the tide must have drifted the body onwards, for it could not be found!

They proceeded to one of the nearest stations where drags were kept, and having procured the necessary apparatus, they returned to the fatal spot. After the lapse of above an hour, they succeeded in raising the lifeless body of their lost friend. All the usual remedies were employed for restoring suspended animation; but in vain; and they now pursued the remainder of their course to London, in mournful silence, with the corpse of him who had commenced the day of pleasure with them in the fulness of

health, of spirits, and of life! Amid their severer grief, they could not but reflect how soon one of the joyous twelve had slipped out of the little festive circle.

The months rolled on, and cold December came with all its cheering round of kindly greetings and merry hospitalities: and with it came a softened recollection of the fate of poor Fortescue; *eleven* of the twelve assembled on the last day of the year, and it was impossible not to feel their loss as they sat down to dinner. The very irregularity of the table, five on one side, and only four on the other, forced the melancholy event upon their memory.

There are few sorrows so stubborn as to resist the united influence of wine, a select circle of friends, and a season of prescriptive gaiety. Even those pinching troubles of life, which come home to a man's own bosom, will light up a smile, in such moments, at the beaming countenances and jocund looks of all the rest of the world; while your mere sympathetic or sentimental distress gives way, like the inconsolable affliction of a widow of twenty, closely besieged by a lover of thirty.

A decorous sigh or two, a few becoming ejaculations, and an instructive observation upon the uncertainty of life, made up the sum of tender posthumous "offerings to the *manes* of poor George Fortescue," as they proceeded to discharge the more important duties for which they had met. By the time the third glass of champagne had gone round, in addition to sundry potations of fine old hock and "capital madeira," they had ceased to discover anything so very pathetic in the inequality of the two sides of the table, or so melancholy in their crippled number of eleven.

The rest of the evening passed off to their hearts' content. Conversation was briskly kept up amid the usual fire of pun, repartee, anecdote, politics, toasts, healths, jokes,

broad laughter, erudite disquisitions upon the vintage of the wines they were drinking, and an occasional song. Towards twelve o'clock, when it might be observed that they emptied their glasses with less symptoms of palating the quality of what they quaffed, and filled them again with less anxiety as to which bottle or decanter they laid hold of, they gradually waxed moral and tender; sensibility began to ooze out; "poor George Fortescue!" was once more remembered: those who could count, sighed to think there were only eleven of them; and those who could see, felt the tears come into their eyes, as they dimly noted the inequality of the two sides of the table. They all agreed, at parting, however, that they had never passed such a happy day, congratulated each other upon having instituted so delightful a meeting, and promised to be punctual to their appointment the ensuing evening, when they were to celebrate the new-year, whose entrance they had welcomed in bumpers of claret, as the watchman bawled "past twelve!" beneath the window.

They met accordingly; and their gaiety was without any alloy or drawback. It was only the *first* time of their assembling, after the death of "poor George Fortescue," that made the recollection of it painful; for, though but a few hours had intervened, they now took their seats at the table, as if eleven had been their original number, and as if all were there that had been ever expected to be there.

It is thus in everything. The *first* time a man enters a prison—the *first* book an author writes—the *first* painting an artist executes—the *first* battle a general wins—nay, the *first* time a rogue is hanged (for a rotten rope may provide a second performance, even of that ceremony, with all its singleness of character), differ inconceivably from their *first* repetition. There is a charm, a spell, a novelty, a freshness, a delight, inseparable from the *first* experience (hanging al-

ways excepted, be it remembered), which no art or circumstance can impart to the *second*. And it is the same in all the darker traits of life. There is a degree of poignancy and anguish in the *first* assaults of sorrow which is never found afterwards. Ask the weeping widow, who, "like Niobe all tears," follows her fifth husband to the grave, and she will tell you that the *first* time she performed that melancholy office, it was with at least five times more lamentations than she last discharged it. In every case, it is simply that the *first* fine edge of our feelings has been taken off, and that it can never be restored.

Several years had elapsed, and our eleven friends kept up their double anniversaries, as they might aptly enough be called, with scarcely any perceptible change. But, alas! there came one dinner at last, which was darkened by a calamity they never expected to witness, for on that very day, their friend, companion, brother almost, was hanged! Yes! Stephen Rowland, the wit, the oracle, the life of their little circle, had, on the morning of that day, forfeited his life upon a public scaffold, for having made one single stroke of his pen in a wrong place. In other words, a bill of exchange which passed *into* his hands for L.700, passed *out* of it for L.1700; he having drawn the important little prefix to the hundreds, and the bill being paid at the banker's without examining the words of it. The forgery was discovered,—brought home to Rowland,—and though the greatest interest was used to obtain a remission of the fatal penalty (the particular female favorite of the prime minister himself interfering), poor Stephen Rowland was hanged. Everybody pitied him; and nobody could tell why he did it. He was not poor; he was not a gambler; he was not a speculator; but phrenology settled it. The organ of *acquisitiveness* was discovered in his head after his execution as large as a pigeon's egg. He could not help it.

It would be injustice to the ten to say, that even wine, friendship, and a merry season, could dispel the gloom which pervaded this dinner. It was agreed beforehand, that they should not allude to the distressing and melancholy theme; and having thus interdicted the only thing which really occupied all their thoughts, the natural consequence was, that silent contemplation took the place of dismal discourse; and they separated long before midnight. An embarrassing restraint, indeed, pervaded the little conversation which grew up at intervals. The champagne was not in good order, but no one liked to complain of its being *ropy*. A beautiful painting of Vandyke which was in the room, became a topic of discussion. They who thought it was *hung* in a bad place, shrank from saying so; and not one ventured to speak of the *execution*, of that great master. Their host was having the front of the house repaired, and at any other time he would have cautioned them, when they went away, as the night was very dark, to take care of the *scaffold;* but no, they might have stumbled right and left before he would have pronounced that word, or told them not to *break their necks*. One, in particular, even abstained from using his customary phrase "this is a *drop* of good wine;" and another forbore to congratulate the friend who sat next him, and who had been married since he last saw him, because he was accustomed on such occasions to employ figurative language, and talk of the holy *noose* of wedlock.

Some fifteen years had now glided away since the fate of poor Rowland, and the ten remained; but the stealing hand of time had written sundry changes in the most legible characters. Raven locks had become grizzled—two or three heads had not as many locks altogether as may be reckoned in a walk of half a mile along the Regent's Canal—one was actually covered with a brown wig—the crow's feet were visible in the corner of the eye—good old port and warm

madeira carried it against hock, claret, red burgundy, and champagne—stews, hashes, and ragouts, grew into favor—crusts were rarely called for to relish the cheese after dinner—conversation was less boisterous, and it turned chiefly upon politics and the state of the funds, or the value of landed property—apologies were made for coming in thick shoes and warm stockings—the doors and windows were more carefully provided with list and sand-bags—the fire more in request—and a quiet game of whist filled up the hours that were wont to be devoted to drinking, singing, and riotous merriment. Two rubbers, a cup of coffee, and at home by eleven o'clock, was the usual cry, when the fifth or sixth glass had gone round after the removal of the cloth. At parting, too, there was now a long ceremony in the hall, buttoning up great-coats, tying on woollen comforters, fixing silk-handkerchiefs over the mouth and up to the ears, and grasping sturdy walking-canes to support unsteady feet.

Their fiftieth anniversary came, and death had indeed been busy. One had been killed by the overturning of the mail, in which he had taken his place in order to be present at the dinner, having purchased an estate in Monmouthshire, and retired thither with his family. Another had undergone the terrific operation for the stone, and expired beneath the knife—a third had yielded up a broken spirit two years after the loss of an only-surviving and beloved daughter—a fourth was carried off in a few days by a *cholera morbus*—a fifth had breathed his last the very morning he obtained a judgment in his favor by the Lord Chancellor, which had cost him his last shilling nearly to get, and which, after a litigation of eighteen years, declared him the rightful possessor of ten thousand a year,—ten minutes after he was no more. A sixth had perished by the hand of a midnight assassin, who broke into his house

for plunder, and sacrificed the owner of it, as he grasped convulsively a bundle of Exchequer bills, which the robber was drawing from beneath his pillow, where he knew they were every night placed for better security.

Four little old men, of withered appearance and decrepit walk, with cracked voices, and dim, rayless eyes, sat down, by the mercy of Heaven (as they themselves tremulously declared), to celebrate, for the fiftieth time, the first day of the year; to observe the frolic compact which, half a century before, they had entered into at the Star and Garter at Richmond! Eight were in their graves! The four that remained stood upon its confines. Yet they chirped cheerily over their glass, though they could scarcely carry it to their lips, if more than half full; and cracked their jokes, though they articulated their words with difficulty, and heard each other with still greater difficulty. They mumbled, they chattered, they laughed (if a sort of strangled wheezing might be called a laugh); and when the wines sent their icy blood in warmer pulse through their veins, they talked of their past as if it were but a yesterday that had slipped by them,—and of their future, as if it were a busy century that lay before them.

They were just the number for a quiet rubber of whist; and for three successive years they sat down to one. The fourth came, and then their rubber was played with an open dummy; a fifth, and whist was no longer practicable; *two* could play only at cribbage, and cribbage was the game. But it was little more than the mockery of play. Their palsied hands could hardly hold, or their fading sight distinguish, the cards, while their torpid faculties made them doze between each deal.

At length came the LAST dinner; and the survivor of the twelve, upon whose head four score and ten winters had showered their snow, ate his solitary meal. It so chanced

that it was in his house, and at his table, they had celebrated the first. In his cellar, too, had remained, for eight and fifty years, the bottle they had then uncorked, re-corked, and which he was that day to uncork again. It stood beside him. With a feeble and reluctant grasp he took the "frail memorial" of a youthful vow; and for a moment memory was faithful to her office. She threw open the long vista of buried years; and his heart travelled through them all: Their lusty and blithesome spring,—their bright and fervid summer,—their ripe and temperate autumn,—their chill, but not too frozen winter. He saw, as in a mirror, how, one by one, the laughing companions of that merry hour at Richmond, had dropped into eternity. He felt all the loneliness of his condition (for he had eschewed marriage, and in the veins of no living creature ran a drop of blood whose source was in his own); and as he drained the glass which he had filled, "to the memory of those who were gone," the tears slowly trickled down the deep furrows of his aged face.

He had thus fulfilled one part of his vow, and he prepared himself to discharge the other, by sitting the usual number of hours at his desolate table. With a heavy heart he resigned himself to the gloom of his own thoughts—a lethargic sleep stole over him—his head fell upon his bosom—confused images crowded into his mind—he babbled to himself—was silent—and when his servant entered the room, alarmed by a noise which he heard, he found his master stretched upon the carpet at the foot of the easy-chair, out of which he had slipped in an apoplectic fit. He never spoke again, nor once opened his eyes, though the vital spark was not extinct till the following day. And this was the LAST DINNER!

# The Cock-Fight.

In Mexico, there is no variety of sport that produces a more general excitement than the cock-fight. It is not confined, as might be supposed, to any particular class of persons. Between the generalissimo of the army and the rawest recruit—the President of the Republic and the humblest hind—the archbishop of the Church and the meekest member, there is no difference. In the amphitheatre, side by side, stand the priest and the peasant, the hunter and the herdsman, the shopman and the soldier. In juxtaposition may be seen the old man, whose dangling locks are white as the polar snows; the slender youth, whose limbs are slowly rounding into manhood; and the truant boy, scarce old enough to lisp his Spanish name. It is common to every caste and condition—to every age and vocation; and even women are sometimes the willing observants of this barbarous sport.

The excitement of the cock-fight differs, in some respects, from all other kinds of strife. To the course, a man carries his prejudices and his preferences. The name or reputation of the horse; the favor or friendship of the owner; or, if

unacquainted with either, the gait and color of the former, not unfrequently influence his wagers. His feelings once enlisted, he abandons himself to the hope of success. His eyes follow the swift steed in his circuitous course, as long as he leads the race, with a manifest pleasure that is wholly indescribable; and if he falls behind, the gloom of disappointment slowly settles upon his countenance, and his lips instinctively compress to smother the swelling rage within.

But, in either case, he is seldom unprepared for the result. The strife is not the work of a moment. There is always ample time to note the movement of each horse, to remark upon his speed and bottom, and to calculate the chances of a prosperous termination.

And so it is with the bull-fight. Announced beforehand, and for many days the common theme of conversation, the community are filled with anticipation. Perhaps thousands have visited the combatants, and carefully examined their respective powers, noting the size, the color, the horns, the hoofs, and the strength of the one, and the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the height, the limbs, and the muscles of the others; and they enter the arena, alike familiar with the qualities of the bull and gladiators.

The former stands in the midst of the arena, his head and tail elevated, his nostrils distended, and his glaring eyes like balls of fire—the breathing personification of astonishment. Presently the latter enter through wickets, amid the deafening shouts of the overlooking multitude, and approach the excited beast in opposite directions. He looks at one and then at the other, and for a moment remains undecided; but the waving of a red scarf determines him, and he darts towards his provoker with the swiftness of the wind By a dexterous movement of his person, under cover of the scarf, the gladiator escapes the onset, and plunges his knife deep into the body of the angry beast, which, with a rage

greatly increased by the smart of the wound, turns upon his wily adversary, "fierce as ten furies."

But if, perchance, the second attempt is more successful, and the gladiator is forced to the earth, his comrade instantly flies to his relief; and though the horn of the bull may touch the breast of the prostrate man, the slightest noise behind usually diverts his attention. And thus the strife continues, until the gladiators, bruised and mangled, fly from the field, or the bull, faint from the loss of blood, sinks down in death at the feet of his conquerors.

But very different is the excitement of the cock-pit, where all go, the better as well as the spectator, without predilection. For, until after their arrival, it is unknown even to the cockers themselves, what birds will be pitted. From a large number, always exposed for sale on such occasions, the principal betters select, each, one, and place them in the hands of the gamekeepers, for preparation.

These birds, having been some time previous bereft of the weapons nature designed for their defence, are now furnished with gaffles, or artificial spurs, each of which is a polished steel blade, about three inches in length, half an inch wide at the base, curved slightly upwards, sharp at the point and on the upper edge, and firmly fastened to the leg by means of a clasp.

Thus armed and ready for the fight, they are carried about the pit by the gamekeepers, who hold them aloft for the observation of the spectators. It is during this exhibition that the side-bets are made, and the fight is not commenced until the confusion thereupon consequent has entirely subsided.

In general, the cocks so far differ from each other in size of body, color of plumage, or length of tail, as to be easily distinguished. Sometimes, however, there is no perceptible difference beyond that afforded by the help of the knife, by

which one has been previously divested of his comb and gills; and sometimes, when neither or both have been subjected to the cutting process, it becomes necessary, as a distinction, to encumber the leg of one with a bit of white cloth, the disadvantage to be determined by lot.

As the original betters, under the direction of the gamekeepers, usually select the finest cocks in the market, palpable inequalities are very unfrequent, and wagers are almost universal. Indeed, so strong is the gambling propensity among the people, that there is scarcely one who does not avail himself of the opportunity to wager something on the issue of the combat.

When all the bets are taken, and the crowd has become thoroughly settled, then begins the breathless excitement peculiar to this species of sport. The gamekeepers advance towards the centre of the pit, until within a pace or two of each other, when they release the cocks and retire.

These warlike birds, oftentimes before their feet have touched the earth, fly upon each other with a violence that, in the rebound, brings them both upon their backs. But, as soon as they have recovered, they renew the onslaught, and their sharp slashing strokes follow each other in quick succession, until the contest is terminated by disability or death.

* * * * * * * * *

The incident I am about to relate occurred in the city of Saltillo. It was about nine o'clock in the morning of the first Sunday of May of the year eighteen hundred and forty-seven, Lieutenant Cordell and myself were on our way to the cathedral. As we passed the head of one of the narrow cross-streets, our attention was attracted by a large crowd in front of a two-storied building, the lower part of which was used for a grog-shop.

At that day, a gathering in any public place always indi-

cated something of an exciting character; usually a fight or a fandango, both of which were of almost daily occurrence. The former more frequently happened in the streets, and the latter in the houses; but sometimes this order was reversed. But whatever occasioned the throng, as long as the excitement continued, the number increased, every passer-by stopping to inquire the cause.

As our attendance at the cathedral was prompted by curiosity rather than devotion, we quickly turned aside and joined the crowd. On a nearer approach, we observed Guy Winthrop, the poet of our regiment, vigorously elbowing his way towards a narrow wicket in the wall. As a lyrist, he had no superior in the army, save Captain Pike, who wrote the "Battle of Buena Vista," at which the Arkansas cavalry were present when the fight commenced. But, with all his lyrical talents, he had a keen relish for the ludicrous, and was a great lover of excitement and fun; and he managed to find out nearly every amusement, yet was seldom seen at an indifferent exhibition. Thus encouraged, we also directed our efforts to the point mentioned, and, by dint of hard crowding and the expenditure of a brace of picayunes, at length gained admittance.

On passing the wicket, we found ourselves in a narrow winding passage, that led to the back inclosure, in the centre of which stood an amphitheatre: a circular building about thirty-eight or forty feet in diameter. The walls, not less than fifteen feet high, were built of bricks and mortar, and carefully plastered, on both sides, with a hard cement. Five rows of seats, one rising above another, completely surrounded the inside of the edifice.

Long before our arrival, every seat was occupied, and all the space intervening between them and the pit was densely crowded with bystanders. By the assistance of an old friend, who remembered a trifling service rendered some

time previous by my companion, we obtained permission to sit upon the top of the wall, whence we could observe all that occurred below with entire satisfaction.

In the pit, which was formed of a wall about three feet high, and sixty in circumference, were not less than half a hundred boys, each with a cock under his arm. Great rivalry prevailed among them, and they hurried from place to place, using every means in their power to attract attention and secure purchasers.

There was an abundant opportunity for choice among the cocks, which were of almost every shade and variety of color, from the blackness of soot to the whiteness of snow; in addition to which, some were not bigger than a woman's fist, and some were as large as a man's head; while the prices ranged from a rial to a dollar.

A Mexican dandy was endeavoring to draw a wager from a sutler's clerk. They appeared to have difficulty in reconciling some trifling difference. Their conversation was only audible to themselves, and those in the [redacted]ediate vicinity; but it was evident, from their excited [redacted] that there was but little likelihood of an agreement.

In the midst of their quarrel, which might have [redacted]ed to something more serious than words, the corpulent figure of Brigadier General M—— suddenly darkened the entrance, and his stentorian voice filled the amphitheatre. In a moment all eyes were turned upon the new-comer, as he pushed forward towards the pit, calling upon the venders to exhibit their cocks.

The crowd, unaccustomed to such an august presence, instinctively drew back on either hand, affording the elephant an opportunity to pass through unchecked, where a moment before the weasel must have forced his way at the risk of his bones.

The general was closely followed by a Catholic priest,

clad in a suit of grey broadcloth, worn quite threadbare. Over his shoulders loosely hung a blanket which had once been very valuable, and most probably as beautiful. On his head was a red flannel skull-cap, fantastically ornamented with black velvet, and in shape not unlike those frequently worn by jockeys.

At sight of the American officer, all the boys rushed forward, holding their cocks aloft, and clamoring like as many inmates of Bedlam. Each spoke in praise of his own, and in dispraise of every other's; all at the same moment, and every one at the top of his voice.

There was something ludicrous in the scene, especially to the general, who understood not a word of Spanish. For the first dozen seconds he was amused; but as the boys pressed about him, and shouted in his ears, and thrust their cocks in his face, the scene gradually lost its interest. At length he became impatient, and then indignant.

"Begone, you noisy scamps!" he cried, in a thundering voice, accompanied by an angry wave of his great fat hand. The words were uttered in English, and only understood by the interpreter at the priest's elbow; but the gesture had a true Spanish significance, and operated like a charm.

Those nearest the commander retired in silence, completely awed by his indignant manner. But, like Esop's fox, that drove away the glutted flies, their places were immediately occupied by a fresh swarm, shouting even louder than their half-exhausted fellows. This was too much for endurance; the general's anger was thoroughly aroused, and he turned about abruptly and addressed the priest.

"Father Ambrose!" said he, in a resolute tone, at the same time pulling a revolver from his breast pocket, "you must instantly command order and silence, or I'll let off the contents of this weapon among those noisy devils, and make them howl for something."

Immediately the priest raised his finger and uttered a brief remark, and all the boys, devoutly crossing themselves, withdrew to the other side of the pit. Here they remained quietly until one of the gamekeepers arrived and ordered them to be seated.

When all had taken their places, the priest entered the pit, followed by the interpreter, the stakeholder, and the dandy before mentioned. The general was in that peculiar maudlin condition that always unfits a man for climbing, so he contented himself with a seat on the wall of the pit, between two of the venders.

On raising his eyes to the crowded seats that rose nearly to the top of the wall of the edifice, they chanced to fall upon my companion, with whom he was slightly acquainted, and he immediately summoned him to his assistance. I retained my seat, as it afforded an excellent opportunity for observation.

"Lieutenant," said the general, extending his hand in a friendly manner, "I am exceedingly glad to meet you, for I've been playing monte with that old grey friar until I'm penniless. I want to borrow fifty dollars to bet on a cock-fight, for I'm bound to win my money back or sink my commission."

"General," said my friend, who clearly perceived his condition, and wished to preserve him from the knavery of the priest, "it would afford me much pleasure, but it is quite out of my power. I have not got above a fourth of that sum in my possession."

"Well, give me what you have," said the brigadier, "and borrow the balance from your chum," alluding to myself, "or from some of those volunteers," pointing to a group of Kentucky cavalry, who occupied seats on the opposite side of the amphitheatre.

My friend, still anxious to thwart the crafty old church-

man, interposed several objections, but the determination of the general bore down all opposition. The required sum was raised without difficulty, and with a similar amount from the purse of the priest, deposited in the hands of the stakeholder. After which the general retired to a seat, in a small balcony above the entrance, usually reserved for the principal betters, leaving the matter entirely in the hands of my friend.

From this moment the rascality of the priest was manifest in every transaction. The cock that he proposed to pit, chosen beforehand under the advice of a noted cock-master, was immediately brought forward and placed in the hands of a gamekeeper for preparation. Against this advantage Cordell strongly protested, but to no purpose, for the priest was inflexible.

This reduced the matter to an alternative—to select from among the birds in the pit, or draw the stakes and pay the forfeit. But the General would not consent to the latter, although his representative, who saw at a glance that among all the fowls present there was not a match for the priest's, urged upon him its propriety, supported by reasons that would certainly have influenced a sober brain.

Compelled to make a selection, Cordell passed around the pit, and taking the birds in his hands, one after another, gave them a careful examination. Having accomplished the round, he designated his choice and demanded the price, at the same time drawing forth a long silken purse well filled with Benton mint-drops.

The vender, whose eyes sparkled at the sight of the gold, was about to reply, when his words were arrested by the voice of the priest, who uttered but a single sound, his face piously averted to heaven, and his attenuated fingers busy with his beads. The vender quickly raised his eyes

to the master of his will, and then said, with evident reluctance, that his bird was not for sale.

Another selection was made, but with a similar result. A third, fourth, and fifth followed, but with no better success. Not less than twenty applications were made, and followed by as many refusals. The highest price was offered and declined. The value was doubled and trebled, but all to no purpose. Among all those fifty boys, so eager to sell only a few moments before, not one could be prevailed upon to part with his property.

By this time Cordell had become considerably excited, and would rather have lost the wager than paid the forfeit. He insisted on a purchase, and offered as much silver as he could clutch in his hand, for the meanest bird within the walls. Many eyes turned covetously upon the glittering offer, but nobody dared make the exchange. Then he took from his purse ten American eagles, and laid them one upon another in the palm of his hand, and offered all for a single Mexican game-cock. In an instant every vender was upon his feet, and their eagerness to sell was even greater than at the beginning.

But the last offer was simply an allurement to test their sincerity. Before it was made, Cordell strongly suspected a combination to defraud the General out of the forfeiture. The ardent desire to gain possession of so large a sum of money convinced him, and he instantly resolved not to be overreached. To the surprise of all present, and to the chagrin of the avaricious venders, he very quietly replaced the eagles in his purse, and the purse in his pocket, and with a smile at their discomfiture, turned about and addressed the priest:

"Reverend father," said he, with mock deference, "I entreat that you will influence some of these venders to dispose of their property. They dare not disobey your behests,

and whatever you direct they will speedily execute. It would be a mortification that so many well disposed people, met together on this bright morning of the Lord's day, to witness a little innocent amusement, should be obliged to disperse without the gratification."

"Indeed, sir," replied the man of God, "you attribute a power to me that I do not possess. I have no control over these young people's actions, and still less over their property. If they refuse to sell, I have no power to coerce them; and if I had, have not the right. Nor is it to me a matter of much consequence. Of course I should prefer to win the wager, but am not avaricious, and if needs be, can content myself with the forfeit."

There was a *sang-froid* about the manner of the priest that chafed the proud spirit of Cordell, and the more, as he was unable to divine the cause of the strange behavior among the venders. From his knowledge of their acquisitive disposition, he felt entirely confident that some unseen influence was exerted over them, or that they were acting in concert for a fraudulent purpose.

I saw that he was puzzled, and hastened to explain the mystery. From my elevated position, I could distinctly see all that occurred within the area; and I had noticed, that when Cordell approached the first vender, the old priest prevented the sale by his pious ejaculations. I afterwards observed, that on each successive application, the vender, before he replied, looked at the priest, who, in every instance, forbad the exchange by a significant gesture of his long bony finger. I remarked also, that when the ten eagles were offered, a nod of his old grey head had placed every bird within the power of the purchaser.

When Cordell came to understand the character of the fraud practised, he turned quietly round, and slipping his hand under the stakeholder's blanket, fastened upon his

coat-collar with the grip of a vice. "Now," said he, addressing the wily old priest, "having voluntarily placed yourself in a dilemma, you may cling to whichever horn you prefer. One of two things you must do, and without delay; either you must furnish a cock to complete the match, or relinquish the stake without the forfeit."

Quite a sensation prevailed among the bystanders when these words were rendered into Spanish. Significant looks were exchanged by the alguazils, several of whom were present to preserve order and quiet. The old priest, without alluding to the charge, began at once to palaver about the principles of honor and the rules of the cock-pit.

Meanwhile the stakeholder managed to convey the purse with the wagers, into the hands of the dandy, who immediately tried to escape from the edifice. Perceiving that Cordell's object was likely to be defeated by the secret transfer, I quietly descended from my elevated position, and opportunely intercepted the fugitive.

Baffled on every hand, the villanous old priest, with a most sanctimonious seeming, turned to protest his innocence and crave the general's interference; but to his utter amazement, the brigadier, who was sober enough to comprehend the fraud, was standing on his feet, with his ominous revolver aimed directly at his consecrated crown. "You cursed old shaveling," said he, "if you don't secure me a cock in the twinkling of an eye, I'll send your soul in hot haste to the Devil."

These words terminated the difficulty. The holy man, trembling in his shoes, promised to use his best endeavors. Calling to a little ragged boy, whose arms clasped to his breast an ungainly cockerel, not yet full grown, he directed him to bring it forward for vendition. Cordell insisted on the right to make his own selection, but the general, already grown impatient in consequence of the unnecessary delay,

authorized the purchase, and begged that the contestors might be speedily armed for the fight.

In a few minutes the pit was vacated, except by the cockers, to whom was intrusted the preparation of the combatants. At length everything being in readiness, the general desired to address his champion before the strife commenced. The request excited some mirth among the Mexicans, but was promptly complied with by the gamekeeper. The general put forth his hand, and taking the cockerel by the bill, turned his head to one side and addressed him in the following terms.

"My good fellow," said he, with an air of sincerity, admirably assumed, "the relation we sustain to each other makes it my duty, before you enter the arena, to impress upon your mind a proper sense of the responsibility that rests upon you in this trying moment. By the usages that everywhere prevail among the politer states of our Republic, I have this day become your master by solemn purchase, and have a right to dispose of your service in whatever way may best subserve my purposes. But I design you for an example of my magnanimity.

"Upon the issue of the fight in which you are about to engage, entirely depends the condition of your future existence. If you are defeated, you will be condemned to perpetual slavery; but if you are victorious, you will be freed from your bondage, invested with the rights of citizenship, and adopted into the great family of American fighting-cocks.

"In the coming contest, you are to represent the freest and the happiest people on the face of the earth, and to your keeping is intrusted the honor of their most glorious nation. The result of this combat will be emblematical of the conclusion of the war in which they are now engaged. If you are conquered, all that Taylor has achieved in the

mountains, Scott will lose in the valleys; but if you are triumphant, I shall expect to celebrate the anniversary of our national independence over a hasty plate of soup, at the table of the victorious general, in the palace of the Montezumas.

"Go, sir, and do your duty; and may the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of the Thirteen United Colonies, preserve you from defeat, and your nation from disgrace."

When this address was concluded, Guy Winthrop, from the opposite side of the amphitheatre, cried with a loud voice, "Three cheers for General M——." Immediately a score of hats went up, and as many voices followed in a concert of shouts that excited the wonderment of the whole neighborhood. In the brief quiet that ensued, the interpreter gave a condensed translation of the speech, which was received with shouts of laughter.

Presently one of the inferior alcaldes of the city made his appearance, and the hilarity of his constituents quickly subsided into a murmur of gratification, for he was judge of the combat. He walked forward with a stately tread, and ascended a flight of winding stairs, consisting of seven steps, to a place not unlike one of the ash-hopper pulpits fashionable in the time of Jonathan Edwards. Having seated himself and wiped the perspiration from his brow, he waved his baton, and the gamekeepers forthwith placed the champions on the ground and retired.

The representative of Mexico was a full-grown, well proportioned, vain-glorious game-cock of the red-feather, and as fine a specimen of his breed as was ever pitted. His head and neck were thickly covered with a rich plumage of crimson hue, which mingled with the yellow on his breast, as the light blends with the shade in the mezzotinto. His back and shoulders were purple, and also his wings, which

were lightly tipped with black. His sides and thighs, and the under part of his wings, were scarlet interspersed with yellow. His legs and beak were orange, and his eyes like globules of blood. His crescent tail, which swept the ground like the skirt of a fashionable lady's dress, was a happy mixture of glossy black and fiery vermilion. His broad single comb, with its sharp triangular teeth, fell gracefully upon one side, like the waving plume of a Kossuth hat. And his whole appearance, from the crown of his head even unto the soles of his feet, was that of a Mexican commander at a grand review.

Very different was the appearance of the ungainly cockerel chosen as the representative of five-and-twenty millions of freemen—and some slaves. He was in truth a gawky fellow, not unlike a youth that had shot up a foot or so beyond his years. His manner was decidedly awkward, and his dress shabby and neglected, especially the tail, which was in rather a tattered condition. His outer covering consisted of a thin suit of short feathers, of divers colors, intermixed in a most peculiar manner. But there was neither jet-black nor show-white, deep-green nor blood-red; all were dull, and dingy, and disagreeable.

In other respects he was equally remarkable. He was tall and slender, and carried a high head on slight supporters; but, like many of the people he represented, what he lacked in substance he made up in show, for his legs were of the exact lustre of gold. Altogether, he looked as much like a native of Pike county, as any Missourian that ever measured six feet and three in his yellow unmentionables; and his damaged tail strongly resembled Doniphan's men on their arrival at Buena Vista, fresh from the wilderness.

But it must be borne in mind, that this monster bird, upon whose glittering gaffles hung the glory of a great nation, was only a last year's chicken. He had not yet

attained his complete stature, nor his limbs their just proportions, nor his feathers their full length, nor his colors the gloss and brilliancy of ripe maturity; even his spurs had not yet protruded through the skin of his ankles. Nevertheless, his step was firm and his bearing fearless, and his lustrous eyes flashed with the fire of defiance.

There was one other thing in his appearance particularly worthy of mention. The many colors of his plumage, like those of the prism, nicely intermixed, yet preserved their distinctness. But while the casual observer saw nothing remarkable in the spotted breast and striped back, Guy Winthrop, his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, discovered in the one the great canopy of stars, and in the other the bright rainbow of promise; and by a flourish of the imagination, a poetical license that prosers know nothing about, instantly metamorphosed the motley bird into the American flag. It must be confessed that the resemblance was not very striking, but the idea was happily conceived under the circumstances, and three simultaneous shouts went up from the volunteers for the success of the glorious stripes and stars.

For several moments the proud champion of Mexico looked upon his uncouth antagonist with surprise, and afterwards with curious scrutiny. It was very evident, if his manner was a truthful indication, that he regarded him as a half-fledged upstart, only worthy of his contempt. But, on reflection, he resolved to punish him for his rash presumption, as Walpole did the future Earl of Chatham. Full of this determination, he dropped his head and tail to a level with his back, and rushed furiously athwart the pit, aiming a death-blow at his devoted head.

Meanwhile, the champion of America, highly delighted with his shining spurs, upon which was centred his entire attention, fell into a foolish reverie, and quite forgot the

business in which he was engaged. It was well for his honor and safety that a considerable space separated him from his adversary, else he might have bit the ground without striking a blow for his life, and the cause he represented. But the pompous preparation of his indignant foe aroused him to a full sense of his danger, and the intervening space saved him from immediate destruction.

There was something truly admirable in his manner, as he raised his head and squared himself for the onset. To all appearance, a violent collision was inevitable, and the result was awaited with breathless anxiety. But in this instance, as in many others of much more importance, anticipation was not realized; the spectators were disappointed, and the old warrior surprised and mortified. His wily adversary, like the great Washington, quietly stood upon his defence, until the sword was raised to strike the blow, then crouched and disappeared, leaving the victor to digest his wonderment as best he could, while he was dealing a counter blow, with bloody effect, in his unprotected rear.

Contrary to every one's expectation, in the first round America escaped unhurt, while Mexico received a serious injury. But the old cock, though he severely felt the blow, managed to conceal the extent of the damage, by the interposition of a fearless front and another furious attack. This time the cockerel maintained his position, and returned blow for blow; but after ten or a dozen sharp strokes, dealt with the grace and skill of an adept, he was compelled to retreat and leave the field, now stained with blood, in the possession of his more powerful enemy.

At the distance of half a rod he came to a halt and faced about to view the battle-ground, in the centre of which stood the conqueror, exulting in his triumph. First he flapped his beautiful wings, then arched his graceful neck, then opened wide his beak, and in a clear and ringing

voice, cried "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" After the lapse of a moment he essayed to repeat the exultation, but was unexpectedly interrupted by the cockerel, who rushed upon him just as he cried "Cock-a—," and upset him with the "doodle-doo" in his throat.

Hereupon the struggle was renewed, and maintained with great vigor for several seconds, but without material advantage to either party. Then followed a succession of feints and skirmishes, in which Fabius tried to outwit Hannibal, and the energies of both were well nigh exhausted. For a few moments they stood beak to beak, to regain their breath and recover their strength; and then fell upon each other with a fierceness and a fury that made their previous struggles seem as play.

In all the vast multitude who looked down upon the combatants when they dropped from the hands of the gamekeepers, there was not one who anticipated such a bloody and protracted contest. The bird of Mexico was in his prime, and inspired his friends with confidence, while the other failed to excite even a hope in any but the breast of Winthrop. But he was strangely impressed with a presentiment, a something that poets regard as prophecy, that the cockerel would achieve the victory; and he clung to the conviction throughout the combat, against every appearance, the decision of the judge, and the approval of the spectators.

Among the persons present on this occasion, were men of sixty winters, who had never witnessed such a struggle where the combatants were armed with gaffles. In less than half the time already consumed, they had seen birds of much better appearance than the cockerel fall to the earth, in some instances decapitated, and in others totally disembowelled. And to them it was a matter of the greatest wonder, how he could withstand the superior force of the old

cock, whose every blow, dealt with a master's skill, scattered the motley feathers of his breast, and spattered the ground with his blood.

But moments passed into seconds, and seconds into minutes, and minutes multiplied, and still the fight progressed. At length, overcome with fatigue, they abandoned the spur and resorted to the beak, in the use of which the younger warrior, whose crest was low and double, had greatly the advantage. In this manner the struggle continued, long after the feathers were stripped from their necks, and until the comb of the old cock was completely cleft asunder. In the hand to hand fight he was no match for Young America, under whose drooping wing he was at last obliged to thrust his bleeding head for protection.

A brief respite ensued. The old bird, weary from exertion, and weak from the loss of blood, seemed anxious to suspend the strife until he had in some measure regained his breath and strength. But the younger one, like youth in general, was impatient for the termination, and vainly tried, by every means in his power, to dislodge his enemy. At length, regarding him as a cowardly skulker, and feeling for him a thorough contempt, as he endured his blows with the submissiveness of a spaniel or negro slave, and withal, wearied with his fruitless exertions, he stretched forth his long featherless neck, and uttered a shrill cry of defiance.

Old chanticleer, who had cunningly resolved to undergo temporary injuries that he might in the end realize permanent benefits, perceiving that the anger of his foe, in his exhausted condition, totally unfitted him for vigorous resistance, suddenly darted forth from beneath the sheltering wing, and set upon him with the fury of annihilation. Seizing him by the back of the head, he dealt full half a dozen blows upon his bleeding breast, in such quick succession that not one could be returned. And when his hold gave way,

the cockerel staggered back a few paces, reeled from side to side, and tumbled headlong to the earth.

Up to this moment a breathless quiet prevailed throughout the amphitheatre; it was now broken by a shout from the Mexicans, that burst upon the ear like a peal of unexpected thunder. But before the exultation could be repeated, the judge raised his baton, and in the silence that immediately followed, proclaimed the victory. To the surprise of the spectators, nearly all of whom acquiesced in the decision, Guy Winthrop insisted that the proclamation was premature.

"Right, by heavens!" shouted the brigadier, springing to his feet, greatly excited. He had begun to entertain hopes of victory, so nobly did the young bird sustain his part in the fight. "And sir," he added, addressing the judge, "your decision is too hasty, for as long as life remains, hope may be entertained, and that bird is not yet dead. You must, therefore, reserve your opinion until life is extinct, or I have abandoned the contest."

The judge listened to this address from the lips of the interpreter with manifest indignation, but he gave it no notice beyond a contemptuous curl of his lip. In the further exercise of his duty, he again waved his baton, and the gamekeepers entered the pit to remove the combatants; but they had scarcely crossed the walls, when Cordell leaped before them and forbade their interference. A couple of alguazils flew to their assistance, and a struggle would have ensued, had not the murderous revolver of the brigadier prevented. It was aimed directly at the breast of the alcalde, whom he threatened with instant death if the pit was not speedily vacated.

At that day there was no weapon so much feared by the inhabitants of Mexico, as the American six-shooter. It was new to most of them, and its operation a wonder and a

mystery. With the double-barrel they were familiar, and it was frequently found in their possession. Its principles were easily explained and understood, and with these they were thoroughly acquainted. The running noose, or lariat, was also in common use, and in their hands a most dangerous and deadly instrument. Perhaps on all the waters of the Mississippi there was not a blackleg better skilled in the use of the long knife, upon which they relied for safety in close combat, under almost all circumstances. And sometimes they used the vengeful stiletto in a manner that would not have shamed the proudest assassin of that degenerate people from whom they derived its use, together with their laws, language, manners, customs, fashions, religion, and the best blood of their nation.

But the deadly revolver was a weapon only known to them by its effects; and these were so unaccountable and murderous, that many regarded it as an invention of the Devil, placed in the hands of the hirsute barbarians of the north, for the destruction of Catholics and the dissemination of the corrupting principles of Protestantism. One of those little guns, in the hands of an American, could produce greater consternation among an assemblage of natives, than a score of foot-guards with their bayonets fixed and their muskets set for a charge. It was valuable on all occasions; now to preserve peace, and anon to quell disturbance; at one time to enforce law, and at another to protect life; and occasionally, as in the present instance, to exact even-handed justice, which was too seldom received in that country, especially by the natives of the United States.

Terrified by the menacing attitude of the general, the judge promised to withhold his decision until life was extinct; another flourish of his baton arrested the progress of the alguazils, and caused the gamekeepers to retire. Cordell also withdrew, and the pit was again in the posses-

sion of the combatants, which, fortunately, were not in the least disturbed by the events that produced so much excitement among the spectators.

After two or three ineffectual attempts to regain his feet, the cockerel tumbled over on his side, evidently discouraged; but he still kept his head from the ground and his eye on his adversary, who, at the distance of two or three yards, looked down upon his helpless victim with the pride of a conqueror. In this manner several minutes elapsed, and the Mexicans had begun to manifest their impatience by certain low mutterings that are better omitted, when it was observed by one of the gamekeepers, that the old bird was gradually losing his strength, and possibly his life, through the rear-wound received at the commencement of the struggle. About the same time, Guy Winthrop noticed the blood trickling down from the long purple feathers that hung so gracefully from the root of his tail, and he rightly suspected the cause of the old priest's anxiety after he had been spoken to by the gamekeeper.

Presently the proclaimed conqueror grew unsteady, and staggered about the pit like a drunken man; and soon after his head dropped upon his breast, and he fell forward to the earth. But he immediately recovered his feet, and stood still for a moment to muster his expiring energies, then dropped his head and tail to a level with his back, as in the beginning of the engagement, and rushed upon his helpless foe, with the obvious design of destroying his life before he himself expired.

The cockerel clearly perceived the intention, but was unable to avert the threatened destruction. But where life is endangered, the slightest chance for its preservation is not to be despised; so he laid his head upon the ground and threw up his feet to shield his body. The onslaught was terrific, and the gaffle that struck the blow, coming in

contact with the clasp on the leg of the prostrate bird, was snapped into pieces and scattered about the pit. But the force of the impetuous tilter carried him several feet beyond his enemy, where falling headlong, like Judas Iscariot, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out.

Exasperated by a cruelty that would not even spare a fallen foe, the cockerel renewed his exertions, and after two or three efforts regained his feet. For a moment he remained stationary, then cautiously approached his chivalrous victim, walked slowly round his mangled corpse, looked with pride upon his death-wounds, and then, pausing by his side, in a clear and musical voice chanted the hymn of his victory.

On examination, it appeared that the old cock had died of the blow inflicted in his rear at the opening of the war, when the cockerel, eluding his attack by a masterly stratagem, crossed the Delaware on the ice, captured the Hessians at Trenton, and dispersed the British at Princeton. It is true that he afterwards fought bravely at Brandywine and Monmouth court-house, and died game at Yorktown, yet he was never able to recover from the fatal blow received at a time and in a quarter least expected.

But the younger bird, though his neck was stripped of its feathers, his crest picked in pieces, and his breast covered with wounds, was still alive. He had contended against a veteran, had been repulsed, compelled to retreat, borne to the earth by a superior force, and reduced to extremity; but he had survived every attack, recovered from every defeat, drove the enemy behind his entrenchments, harassed his marches, crippled his energies, scattered his resources, defeated his hopes, destroyed his confidence, and, in the end, achieved a complete victory.

"Now," said the general with a smile, addressing the disappointed judge, "you may decide the combat, and

award the wager. Father Ambrose," he added, turning to the avaricious priest, "I have retrieved my morning losses and something over, and should be glad to have you, with these, my friends," alluding to Cordell, Winthrop, and myself, "dine with me at the American. You see," he continued, speaking to the spectators, "that neither Molina del Rey nor Chapultepec will prevent the success of our arms in the valley of Mexico. And to you," designating the poet, "I will give that cock, with the hope that, if he survives, you will carry him with you to the United States."

Winthrop received the present with a pleasure even greater than the general felt when he fobbed the old priest's gold. He took immediate steps to staunch the blood and dress the wounds; and he carried him to the camp, and nursed him with so much care, that in a few weeks he was entirely recovered. When the Twelve Months' Volunteers were discharged from the service by reason of the expiration of the period for which they had enlisted, the poet carried the victorious champion with him to America, and placed him on the hundred and sixty acres of land he had earned in his country's cause, where he still survives, a splendid bird, striped and starred as handsomely as the banner of liberty, the patriarch of the flock, and the progenitor of some of the gayest cocks south of Mason and Dixon's Line.

# Our Major's Story.

"So Brown, you tell me, has been appointed executor to Smith's will," said our major the other day, as we were lounging together against the low wall that divides Carlisle Terrace from the beach. "I'll venture to say the trusts committed to him won't be as strange as mine were the first time *I* was made executor.

"Some years since, I received a letter from my old friend and comrade, Ellis of the —th, telling me that his health had been for some time declining,—that he was about to make his will, and earnestly desiring that I would consent to act as his sole executor,—'there being,' he added, 'a trust of some importance to be undertaken, which I wish to confide to no one but yourself.' The letter concluded with a cordial invitation to pay him a visit at the snug cottage in Devonshire to which he had retired. Now Ellis was like myself—an old bachelor; and, except his half-pay, was, I knew, but little burdened with this world's baggage and accoutrements, so it never occurred to me that the trust I was to undertake could possibly relate to anything more important than the bestowal of legacies on his old housekeeper and butler, or his almost equally antiquated cat and dog. I wrote immediately to accept the invitation,

and early the next morning I deposited myself and my portmanteau in the E —— coach, which, after a day's travelling, left me at my friend's abode. He was himself standing at the garden wicket, ready to give me a cordial welcome. There was nothing very death-like in the clear, bright glance of his eye, or in the firm grasp of his hand; and I wondered internally what the missive he had sent me could possibly mean. However, I kept my thoughts to myself, and followed Ellis into his neat little dining-room, where the snowy tablecloth was speedily and satisfactorily covered with a bountiful repast. Ample justice was done to the fare by myself, and, despite of his mortuary intention, by mine host also. After dinner he produced a capital bottle of port, over which we discussed many of our former campaigning adventures.

"Notwithstanding the fineness of the weather (it was in the beginning of June), I had caught a slight cold on my journey, which towards the close of the evening made itself felt in the very unpleasant form of toothache; and the pain becoming worse, I said to my host,—'I think I must ask your housekeeper to-night for some flannel and camphorated spirit to apply to my unfortunate jaw. You, happy fellow! can't know what toothache is, your teeth look all so good.'

"'Teeth!' cried my host, his countenance changing,—'Teeth!' he repeated, shuddering: 'Ah! you little know—you can't tell——'

"'What's the matter, Ellis—what do you mean!'

"'I mean that a tooth—an unfortunate tooth, has been my ruin, and will cost me my life!' And rising from his chair, he paced up and down the room in a state of the most violent agitation. Greatly astonished, I tried, of course, to soothe him, and induce him to reveal the cause of this strange excitement. 'Well,' he said at last, 'I will read for you the will to which you have kindly promised

to become executor.' I had made no promise of the kind, but my poor friend took it for granted I had done so; and leaving the room, he speedily returned with a folded paper in one hand, and a very small round box in the other.

"Laying these articles on the table, he seated himself in his armchair, pushed aside his glass, and, making a strong effort to speak calmly, began,—'About two months since I had occasion to visit the town of T—— on business, which having speedily despatched, I dined at the hotel, and afterwards set out for a stroll. I passed through the High Street, and walked for some way along the turnpike road without meeting any object of interest whatever. A shady green lane opening on my right, invited me to turn into it—the fragrant hawthorn in the hedge, and the cool fresh grass below, offering a pleasant contrast to the hard dusty road on which I had been walking. I soon found that this quiet lane led to a still more quiet and peaceful churchyard; and threading my way amongst the rustic graves and rude headstones, I moralized on them after my own fashion, if not precisely according to that of Harvey. I had had at one time a transient fancy for the study of phrenology, and still retained a habit of inspecting the cerebral developments of every one whom I met. It was, therefore, with some curiosity that I picked up a large, round, well-bleached skull lying on the ground. What particularly interested me, however, was the great beauty and regularity of the teeth; they were all perfect, and as evenly ranged as if they had been prepared to decorate the window of some advertising dentist. Led by an idle impulse, which I could not then nor can I now account for, I pulled out one of the grinders, put it into my waistcoat pocket, and, carelessly throwing down the skull, returned to the inn. Having partaken of tea, accompanied by some excellent muffins, I went to bed, and being fatigued with my journey, soon fell asleep.

"'I had slept for some time, but how long I cannot tell, when I was suddenly awakened by the door of my room opening. In stalked a tall figure dressed in black, with a white neckcloth; his head was large, nearly bald, and he wore a pair of gold spectacles. In his hand he carried a silver candlestick, bearing a lighted candle, and advancing to my bedside said in a menacing voice and manner, "Why did you rob me of my tooth?"

"'My tongue suddenly became paralysed; I tried to speak, but could not utter a word.

"'"You have taken my tooth," continued the figure; "and now take your choice. I'm not of a revengeful disposition; I don't want to say or do anything uncivil, but one of two things I must have, and that instantly,—your life, or the best tooth in your head! So look sharp and take your choice."

"'The extremity of terror restored my voice.

"'"Would it not do, sir, to restore you your own tooth again?" I gasped.

"'"No, no!" replied my visitor, shaking his head until the gold spectacles slipped down to the very point of his long nose; "I think I am a very good-natured fellow to give you the choice; so which will you part with—your life or your tooth?"

"'"My tooth!" I exclaimed, in agony: and instantly the apparition, with as much dexterity as if he had been bred a dentist, introduced a forceps into my mouth, and neatly extracted a fine sound molar tooth. Look here,' continued Ellis, opening his mouth, 'see the cavity it has left.'

"There was indeed the space where a large tooth had been extracted, and I remarked that it was the only one deficient in the entire range.

"'Well,' continued my friend, 'that was not all. The fellow pocketed my tooth, and then said—

"'"Now you must promise on your honor as a gentleman, that you will preserve my tooth as long as you live, and make provision that after your death it shall be carefully interred with you. If you don't ——" And with a menacing gesture, the proprietor of *this* departed as he came.'

"Ellis opened the little round box, and showed me, carefully inclosed in cotton, the redoubted tooth.

"I really knew not what to say; it was certainly very difficult to refrain from laughing, but my poor friend was so evidently in earnest, that I merely remarked,—

"'It was a pity the good spectre was not satisfied with resuming his own property, for really his tooth is so exactly the same size and shape as your others, that I think it would have exactly filled the cavity.'

"'It was strange,' said Ellis, without noticing my remark, 'that after such an agitating occurrence I fell asleep, and slept soundly until late next morning. I awoke, feverish and unrefreshed, and returned home as speedily as possible. Ever since that time my health has slowly but surely declined; not perhaps outwardly, but I know and feel that my hour will soon come, and the dread of that fiend's vengeance will embitter my dying moments, unless you, my old, tried friend, will promise to see me buried in T—— churchyard, and with your own hand to place this miserable tooth in my coffin.'

"What could I do but promise? The case was one of decided monomania—argument and ridicule, both of which I tried, only served to make poor Ellis angry, and he was thoroughly determined not to see a physician—a measure which I urged on him strongly.

"I remained with him for a few days, and had the pleasure of leaving him, as I trusted, in better health and spirits than when we met; and I hoped that his absurd fancy, as I deemed it, would soon pass away. I was there-

fore greatly shocked when, in about six weeks afterwards, I received a letter from his old housekeeper, telling me that her master had died somewhat suddenly, but requested with his dying breath that I should be sent for immediately.

"Need I say that I hastened to obey the summons! Very mournful it was, certainly, to enter the silent cottage where I had lately met a warm welcome from my poor friend. A physician was in attendance, and pronounced that death had resulted from disease of the heart. He, the clergyman of the parish, and Ellis's solicitor, were all, at my request, present at the opening of the will. After having disposed of his trifling property in legacies, the document went on to request that I, whom he styled his beloved friend, should have him decently buried in T—— churchyard, and follow in all matters connected with his interment the instructions previously given to me.

"The interment took place without the occurrence of anything worth recording; but after it was over, I felt so wearied and dispirited, that I resolved to take up my abode for the night at the comfortable hotel at T——. After dinner I was suddenly attacked by my old enemy—tooth-ache; and the pain, resisting all the usual applications, became at length so excruciating, that starting up in a sort of frenzy, I inquired for the residence of the best dentist in the town, and speedily found myself in his study. Whether it was the effect of reaction after the rapid exercise I had taken, or the well-known curative influence inherent in the atmosphere of a dentist's house, I know not, but the pain I was suffering gradually abated; and when the operator entered, I felt almost inclined to make a civil retreat without putting his skill to the test. However, on second thoughts, I considered it as well to lay my case before him, and try to obtain some soothing nostrum which might stand me in stead on future occasions. I therefore told him how I had been

affected, and casually mentioned my having come a long journey that morning, and its melancholy cause. 'Ah!' said the dentist, thoughtfully, 'you came from E—— in Devonshire. The name of that village is associated in my mind with a curious incident which occurred to me some three or four months since.' Now I happen to have a decided hankering, whether natural or acquired, after strange stories; and my curiosity being excited, I begged the dentist to have the kindness to satisfy it.

"Seating himself opposite to me, he immediately complied, and began in these words:—

"'One night, between three and four months since, I was aroused near midnight by a loud knocking and ringing at the door. I was just about to step into bed, and my servants having long before retired to their rooms, I hastily resumed my clothes, and answered the summons. An elderly gentleman with a military air and address entered. There was an odd, staring look in his eyes, but he told me in a perfectly coherent manner, that he was suffering from dreadful toothache, and wished to have one of his grinders extracted immediately. Of course, I ushered him into this room, placed him in the patient's chair, and proceeded to examine his jaws. I don't think I ever saw a finer or more regular set of teeth,—not a vestige of decay could I perceive in any of them—and the one which he pointed out as the offender seemed to me perfectly free from disease. However, he insisted so strongly on having the tooth pulled out, declaring that his comfort, nay, his very life, depended on its being done, that I consented, though most unwillingly, to perform the operation, and in a twinkling the tooth was out. Having paid me my fee, the patient deliberately wrapped up his tooth, put it into his pocket, rose, and wishing me good-night, was about to depart, when a suspicion which arose in my mind caused me suddenly to thrust a lighted

candle close to his eyes. They never blinked: the pupils were fixed and distended: in fact, to cut the story short my visitor was fast asleep, and in a fit of somnambulism had left his bed, and caused me to extract his excellent tooth. As he still continued in the trance, and it would have been dangerous to arouse him suddenly, I prevailed on him to allow me to accompany him home. He made his way with unerring accuracy to the hotel; and the gates happening to be open for the reception of the occupants of a night-coach, I saw him to his room without attracting observation.

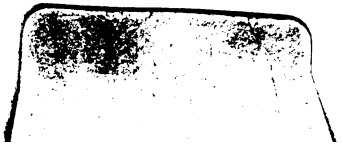
"'On inquiring after him next morning, I heard that he had left by an early conveyance for E——, in Devonshire.'

"'I looked attentively at the dentist: he was a tall man, dressed in black, with a white neckcloth; his head was large, nearly bald, and he wore a pair of gold spectacles, which had a trick of slipping down to the point of his long nose whenever he shook his head, which he did pretty frequently.

"'Did you ever ascertain,' I asked, 'the name of your visitor?'

"'Yes,' replied the dentist. 'He took the blank part of a letter from his pocket, and tore off the corner to wrap up his tooth; the remainder he dropped on the carpet, and it bore the address:—

"'Capt. H. Ellis,'—th Regiment,
'E——, Devonshire.'

"Here then was the explanation of my poor friend's monomania. He actually died the victim of somnambulism. And such was my first adventure as executor of a will."

The End.